

## **Life under The Doctor (1958-63)**

**Peter Ward**

**It was thanks to my father's over-riding business ambitions that I was dragged down South from my beloved Doncaster, in South Yorkshire. There, I had attended the Grammar School, the seventh oldest in the country c.1350. In many ways, a fine, traditional Northern Grammar School yet with its fair share of beaters and bruisers. Although for me, joy of joys, it cherished most certainly one of the great, inspired Music teachers of his generation.**

**Oh dear! HCS came as a horrible shock when I started in the freezing January Term, in the middle of a severe spell of snow and ice. Dr AR Simpson was all smiles to my father when I was taken along, on that first day. (I had come with a good Report.) The smile vanished, however, when The Doctor mentioned the option of Cadets or Scouts, the obvious emphasis being upon the former. I had no interest in either and my father upset the Headmaster when he suggested that perhaps 'Scouts were the lesser of the two evils!' A little unfair on Scouting, I have to say. Of course, the unspoken possibility of Non-Conformity did not crop up. This brave band of desperados, who dared not to sign up to either of the two groups of official worthiness, was beneath mention!**

**A poor start; combined with the discovery that I was months behind in every single subject. DGS educated at the normal Grammar School rate. HCS at a far faster pace aiming to get the 'brightest' through their 'O' Levels by the end of the Fourth Year (today's Year 10.) This was to have an unfortunate knock-on effect on many pupils of which I was just one.**

**Having come from a fine school building with its glorious Victorian Library, I did not admire the 'greyness' of the older (1911) part of the Harrow County. A uniform Battleship Grey covered the woodwork of all doors and windows. Had the rogue Bigham done a deal with Portsmouth Naval Dockyard and set up a deal? More on this Great Militarist, later. Corridors were dark and grim, linked by staircases where smaller boys were pushed out of the way by muscular rugger-playing 'hards.'**

The new building, completed shortly after the Second World War, was far more acceptable. Lighter, airy and largely dedicated to non-Simpsonian subjects such as the Sciences, Metal and Woodwork, Geography and PE. The 'New Hall' was fairly spectacular with its now redundant Honours Board. A fine organ that made my eyeballs bulge out like...! And a stained glass window dedicated to The Fallen and, if memory serves me right, the former Head, Randall-Williams. Impressive – until one heard the organ. This was an instrument fought for by the School's former Chemistry Master, by then Head of Music. George Thorn was, apparently, a church organist at Watford. What combinations of stops Thorn chose to pull out I have no idea. As a pianist of little note I am hardly qualified to comment. But the fact of the matter is that he made a grotesquely disharmonious sound; coarse, strident and vulgar. And the organ was not to blame! This became clear when a Master called Waller was occasionally permitted to play. A revelation. Suddenly, it sounded like a musical instrument. And this was confirmed after Thorn's welcome retirement when a 'proper' musician was appointed; the gifted and kindly Arthur Haley. Inevitably, he was dubbed 'Bill'. It could not be avoided and he took it well.

Thorn's lasting gift to the school was the School Song he and Randall-Williams ran up together. This was very much a product of its time. It now 'graces' the HCS web site and can be heard when one foolishly forgets to remove the audio connection on the computer, or worse, the speakers. Jingoistic, suffused with Kiplingesque sentiments, this awful piece of music seems now destined to be played into eternity. Given the number of hits on the site, it may already rank as one of the most played pieces of music. Mozart, eat your heart out!

BBC Radio visited the school, possibly in 1960, to record for a Feature on 'School Songs'. Of course, Dr Simpson was determined for a great show, aware that the Harrow School Song, not to mention the Eton Boating Song were bound to be included. In his relentless and ruthless pursuit of 'excellence', Simpson was determined to out-do all major Public Schools and rival Grammar Schools. The idea being that HCS would come out Top Dog - which, in one sense, it did.

**Dr Simpson was in for a shattering disappointment. Up in the Balcony, a rebellious group of Sixth Form Economists had made plans to sabotage the recording. These unwanted elements, many of whom went off to LSE and major universities, deliberately slowed, or sped up, the pace. Simpson, being unmusical, did not, at first, appear to notice. However, when noises and calls more fitting to the farmyard or jungle began to penetrate, even he caught on.**

**The BBC OB engineers were forced to stop the recording and urgent discussions took place in front of the whole school Assembly. A red-faced and furious Simpson went on the Rant and Rave to which we had become accustomed. I remember the word ‘Hobbledehoys’ was used. This was one of Simpson’s greater Scottish insults towards miscreants. It ranked higher even than his public dressing down of a classmate of mine whom he described, referring to his near drainpipe trousers and semi-Elvis quiff, as ‘a Hungarian renegade from Soho smelling of spaghetti!’ Xenophobic and distinctly unfair on Hungarians. But I digress.**

**Several abortive attempts to record were made by the sound engineers. By now, the famous pause approaching the climax became a target for interruption. The line runs:**

**‘If beaten (followed by a single silent beat) TRY AGAIN!’**

**The brief pause had always been a potential trap for the non-musical. Now, it was punctuated by spasmodic and uncoordinated calls of ‘TRY’ to the point that the engineers became so frustrated at their repeated attempts to get nowhere, they abandoned further recording. Simpson’s face grew grim and ashen. The square mouth changed to the rectangular. He and his school had been massively humiliated. But, as ever, he had the last word. Gesticulating wildly, he shouted to the offending balcony, “You can’t win, you know. The tapes can be edited!” Whether or not they were I do not know. As I ended up a Chief Producer in BBC Radio I know, from experience, there was sufficient material to cobble together something acceptable in a prolonged session in an editing channel. (I once accidentally cut the Duke of Edinburgh out of a tape and he ended up in the bin. After hours of punctilious searching, we finally retrieved HRH and restored him to his rightful place in the programme!)**

**There is another story of Thorn's organ which may or may not be apocryphal. Allegedly, an incident took place a couple of years before I got to the school (1956?) when the Great Organist laid down a chord to start the first hymn of the assembly. I have been told that clouds of white flour billowed from the organ pipes, up in the loft, and descended to dust the gathered throng. (Can any reader confirm this?)**

**I suppose it is inevitable that mention of 'Thorn's organ' will bring guffaws to those who knew the man. It is schoolboy, adolescent stuff but then that's what we were about. One has only to read the HCS web site contributions to find there are references to his 'affection' for boys. In my time, he had made it to Deputy Head and had a reputation for cruelty and harsh caning. Personally, I managed to avoid a Thorn caning but was informed that it was not a very healthy experience. The man possessed a nasty sort of leer when both fondling and caning boys. There was nothing he enjoyed more, so it appeared, than a satisfying caning session. Victims of the leer, were invited to 'help him off with his jacket' and were then told before laying in with abandon, "This hurts me far more than it hurts you!" It was a relief to us all, in 1959, when he retired. Although the most relieved were the musical boys.**

**Our time at Harrow County coincided with the so-called Youth Culture of the later 50s and 60s. The War was over. We had not known it. And our generation was beginning to push. Sacred cows and fossilised attitudes were challenged. The British Empire (increasingly the unwanted and undefined Commonwealth) was crumbling fast. American 'values' swept across the Atlantic. Teenagers were beginning to see themselves as an entity not to be confused with out-moded 'square' tastes and fashion. Music was loud and blarey. Bill Haley and the Comets, Little Richard and numerous pale British imitations. The Military which had, after all, won the War was not greatly respected. All this spilled over and into HCS. So many Masters came from the Services and included quite high-ranking officers with good war records. School uniform, a Simpsonian obsession, became the big issue. Narrow, if not quite drainpipe, trousers were occasionally seen in the corridors. Outrages such as the wearing of suede shoes and yellow jumpers began to creep in. School caps were removed out of sight of the building and always on the upper, smoking decks of buses. Smoking was the rage. Including in the school**

**- in the 'bogs', behind the bike sheds, down at Groundsman Jack Warwick's shed, at Scout camps - even occasionally in class.**

**Smoking, the wearing of winkle-picker shoes and 'shortie' raincoats were symbols of outright rebellion. Of course Dr Simpson, the arch-fossil from the Cretaceous Period, was having none of it. Manic rants and raves were performed, on stage. Only the hopelessly out of touch Simpson could have misheard the term 'winkle-picker' and mutate it to 'woodpecker'! What he could not catch onto was the louder he railed, lambasted and humiliated, the more rebellion he incited. It was like Thatcher and Scargill, or the 'Prods' in NI and the IRA. One begets the other to the point that they desperately need each other. Some former pupils (the old word) claim to be scarred by Simpson's intimidatory regime. Others, and I was one, found it stimulating, exciting and ludicrously amusing. It was, no doubt, an adolescent reaction. But, as previously put, adolescents is what we were! Perhaps it was also an escape mechanism. The regime was so totalitarian and backed up by a military presence that pervaded the whole school. Some bright and colourful boys behaved as if they were in Colditz. It became a game. Literally, 'them' against 'us'. "What japes can we get up to, today, chaps? I say, how about water-bombing Runt's Chemistry class? Or chucking stink bombs into Lefty-Right's Scholarship Sixth Maths? Whizzo prang, hey?"**

**Childish? Yes. Foolish? Definitely. Many boys kept their heads down and got on with their dreary work. Many would not dare to say boo to a goose, never mind Colonel Bigham. But there was a funny side. When we were reported for playing football in the Inner Quad, a friend was ordered to bend over Simpson's desk to receive his due deserts. A half-smoked packet of Players' Weights (cheap and dreadful cigarettes) tumbled from his top blazer pocket and hit the deck. The miscreant received an extra two Simpsonian lashes. But I (who was next up) could not help noticing the huge pile of dead fag ends in the Headmaster's ashtray. Further, the colour of the fingers that wielded the cane. Bright, nicotine brown-yellow gained through years of dedicated chain-smoking. The observation cushioned the pain of what was to come. And what happened to those requisitioned Players' Weights? I think we can guess. The fingers would be stained deeper by the end of the day!**

**An entry in the School Caning Book reads as follows:**

**'(Name/date) Smoking in public bus and not wearing his school cap. Two strokes.'**

**Where did this naughty boy go wrong? Should he have smoked in a private bus, and worn his school cap? Would this have been acceptable?**

**It was the snobbery and official elitism, as defined by Doctor Simpson, that caused so much offence. A read-through of the HCS web site bears witness to the hurt some boys felt, even decades later, because they were not considered 'Oxbridge' material. But 120 boys entering, aged 11, are not all ultimately going to Oxford or Cambridge. They may have to make do with the likes of Manchester, Bristol, Durham, London or Nottingham. Dare I suggest Edinburgh? And we could mention 'lesser' educational institutions. What about the Art Colleges or Music Academies? Colleges of Further Education, Technical Colleges (God forbid) and Teachers' Training Colleges. But lowest of the low – those who, after five miserable and unsuccessful years at Harrow County, departed with minimal 'O' Levels to their name and went into banks, business, industry and insurance. Many of these have proved to be enormously successful. They have prospered and done well.**

**Simpson had a duty to each and every child who entered his educational Emporium. It was virtually impossible not to be bright at Harrow County. The ultra 11-plus system saw to that (HCS was a County Grammar school, believing it took in the very best.) Dr Simpson's view was clear. 'The Best' meant the gifted, academic few. They were his only interest. The rest were dismissed and treated as second or third-raters. This is the great hidden truth of Simpson's long reign in the guise of education. Such wastage! How curious that so many of his 'failures' did well for themselves, once out of his narrowly focussed iron grip. Certainly, they would not have ended up as boring, averagely paid schoolmasters churning out the same dreary old stuff and marking books, in poor conditions, decade after decade.**

**I remember a Sixth Former called Peterson. He was a couple of years ahead of me and had been made a Prefect. Peterson was popular, not one of the creepy or militaristic prefects, and had a fine school track record; good Sports contributions and a brilliant academic. He gained a State Scholarship and off he went, so I believe...to Oxbridge. In our day, the Prefects' Common Room**

overlooked the front of the school. It was entered by ascending an iron spiral staircase. Today's Health and Safety would have a fit. Prefects were in charge of the issue of milk and straws. No doubt, this weighty responsibility developed character and independence. I heard that, on his very last day, Peterson was idling in the Common Room, fitting one straw into another...and another...and another. And so it went on. When the line became unmanageable in the tight space, Peterson lifted a sash window and lowered the straws towards the ground. Eventually, his chain grew so long it actually reached parked cars, beneath. He then went down and applied a straw to a master's radio aerial. And stuck to this final component of the chain from above – a note. 'This is the last straw'. Funny? I think so. Witty/clever? Yes. Harmless. Hardly anything other. And Dr Simpson's reaction? Apoplectic rage towards a young man who had done so well in his time at school. The eighteen year-old Prefect, Peterson, was ordered into the Head's study to receive a caning on his last day. Presumably, Peterson was too decent and mild to do what some other people of his age and physique would have done. What does this say about Simpson and his famously redundant ability to detect humour? I well remember our shocked reaction, on hearing the news.

One particular problem in the school was bullying. Clearly, there was Staff bullying. I was personally kicked down a flight of stairs by a master called Clarkson as he found me in his way on his journey to lunch! The Caning Rate rose year upon year. I know. I studied the figures when the book 'came into my possession'. It now resides, preserved and unharmed, in the HCS Museum, I believe in the old Prefects' Common Room! The document is a grisly record of a school run by fear and lavish corporal punishment. What the book does not include are the unofficial and unrecorded acts of physical punishment carried out by masters who took matters literally into their hands. There were countless incidents of loss of temper resulting in face-slapping and ear-boxing. Many masters had their own 'slipper' - usually a tennis shoe. In the hands of a skilled practitioner - Clarkson was one - real pain could be inflicted. Swanny Amos, the old PE master, even went as far as cutting twigs from nearby trees to whip boys up from the playing fields. In order to make the second row of the rugby scrum flatten their backs, Amos would wield his metal whistle onto arched spines. I had the sense to keep out

at Fly Half but did not enjoy the treatment he meted out to others. He also was prepared to use the thick, bound ends of the climbing ropes, in the gym, on boys' backsides clad only in skimpy PE shorts.

Sadly, this kind of ingrained bullying - the acts of small men amongst defenceless boys - had a curious consequence. Boys can be bullies, too. Thus, if the bullied can find a weaker victim there is sometimes a temptation to take it out on that person. I don't recall that much bullying between boys, although there was some. It was more the case that a weak master or student teachers were made to bear the brunt. This even applied to the rather gentle characters amongst the Staff. There was an awful lot of mickey-taking, and imitating of masters' voices or individual idiosyncratic habits. Some class behaviour was awful. Catapults with paper pellets, paper aeroplanes with rude messages attached, doors sabotaged so that as a weak master walked into a classroom a balanced waste bucket might fall on his head. A lovely old character, Wing Commander Rawnsley (Physics) had been a First World War flying ace. A brave man; much decorated and given a highly responsible position in Coastal Defence during the Second World War. Nicknamed 'Spargo', he did his best in his eccentric but endearing way to control lively boys. Although in his case, we soon worked out that Spargo was kindly and amusing when given the chance. Gradually, he earned our respect and we came rather to revere him and went out of our way to chat to him.

In the case of Captain Eagars, exactly the opposite was true. The wretched man was, as I understand it from those taught French by him, boring and irritable. He was always given the 'C' and 'D' forms - the so-called wasters. It was an explosive mix. Poor, dischevelled Eagars had the unfortunate habit of clearing his throat, making a loud 'Ho-hum' noise. In one particular class, there were some lively characters who soon learned how to imitate him. The 'Ho-hum' would work its way round the class with the man almost literally tearing his hair out. With him, it became an obsession but amongst the boys, a dangerous game. They would haunt him in corridors and from behind hidden corners. Thus 'The Noise' would echo round the building. I nearly got caught up in this in my first week when asked by a couple of boys if I could make this 'Ho-hum' noise. I did not understand but showed willing and did my best to oblige. I was immediately accused of making 'The Noise,' an



offence reportable to Captain Eagars. There was an official Noise Monitoring System. Eagars had established a team of trusted 'spies' (his word.) Their job was to patrol the corridors and playground, at Break, and compile a list of offenders who had 'made The Noise.' In a single day, this often stretched near to double figures. Next day, the spies would escort the unhappy offenders to Captain Eagars for a slipping. In my case, my act was reported to The Chief Spy. He took pity on me, however, and said as I was 'a new boy and didn't understand' he would let me off with a warning! (We later became good cricketing companions!)

It turned out that the role of Chief Spy changed virtually every week as the spies, themselves, often betrayed Eagars and turned out to be the 'Chief Noise-Makers'. Thus, the previous week's Chief ended up getting slipped, the following week, having been grassed up by the Spy Team who were keen to exert revenge. It all got very complicated. A former, disgraced Chief Spy would eventually be forgiven, on good behaviour, and might ultimately make it back to the top position. Of course, the wretched Captain Eagars grew madder and madder and I am sorry to report he suffered a nervous breakdown and had to take early retirement. It's a ghastly story but its origins trace back to the true source of bullying and inequality that was rife within the regime. Bullying perpetuates bullying. And that brings us onto a real bully, a Master of the Ignoble Art, the one and only Lt. Col. W.M. Bigham OBE.

Swaggering, contemptuous and curiously in charge of various pots of money within the school, the Scottish Biology master claimed to hold a Science degree from the University of Glasgow. I simply cannot accept this to be true until proven otherwise. The man was remarkably stupid and entirely unacademic. I know. I ended up doing 'O' Level 'Bilge' under him followed by his appalling attempts at putting over the 'A' Level Botany syllabus. The man was a complete charlatan. How we scraped through to Higher Education remains a mystery. The school, adulated for its brilliant State Scholarships and Oxbridge Open Awards never, in my time, boasted an equivalent Botanical success!

I have to say I managed to avoid his wrath except for one 'O' Level Junior Moment. As Bigham knew no Biology, whatsoever, he was reliant on

delivering dictated passages out of the set text book. Massively boring. Often, he would repeat chapters and rarely did we have the nerve to tell him. On the odd occasion this happened, he would get very angry and explain it was 'policy' as that particular part was bound to come up in the exams! His technique was somewhat devious. The book was wrapped up deeply in his academic gown. (Where did he acquire it? Surely not in Glasgow.) Bigham would stand at the back of the room, dictating laboriously. In this way, he imagined we had not cracked he was reading stuff, word for word. One day, I foolishly opened the textbook and began to copy ahead of him. It relieved the boredom in some way. Next thing I knew was a mighty crack on the top of the head from Bigham's hard cover textbook. I fell off my Biology stool and was momentarily dazed. Of course, a shouting Bigham stood over me telling me not to be so clever!

At the blackboard, he had problems. Sometimes, diagrams were necessary to put up. The book was passed to even deeper recesses of the black gown and he took quick, darting peeps at the contents before attempting to illustrate on the chalk board. He seriously imagined we had not cottoned on to what he was up to! 'Spirogyra' was the only drawing he could illustrate from memory – a magnificent feat for a Head of Biology. We must have suffered Spirogyra at least a dozen times. It was staggering incompetence. Three of us did get our own back on him, however. Graham Reeve, John Howard and I crowded into the red telephone box in Sheepcote Road and rang him up. We were smack opposite the extension which housed the small Biology 'A' level lab. Being good mimics, we could easily do the 'Shwock' accent. Why was he called that? Now, we selected Welsh. To our horror, he answered the phone but we went through with the risky jape. Representing the *Spirogyra Company of South Wales*, we offered him a gross of the filamentous green alga which he promptly accepted. The deal was done and he was promised immediate delivery. He was that stupid!

All cadets, scouts and non-conformists will recall the awful Friday assemblies when the CCF paraded in all its magnificence – Army, Navy and Airforce. Boy sergeants, corporals, lance corporals, leading seamen, able seamen – sporting their stripes and polished boots and skidding on metal studs. It was really very funny. Especially after school when they were marched and

**shouted around the Outer Quad by spotty faced embryonic Hitlers, Raeders and Goerings. Not that we scouts looked any better; silly green berets and pale blue neck ties held on by the infamous woggle. Dark green shirts – various badges. I only made Second Class but proudly showed off my ‘Parle Francais’ (can’t do accents on computer) and ‘Birdwatcher’ badges. Deep blue corduroy shorts which were meant to be worn nearly down to the knees a la 1920s and Baden-Powell style. These were generally rolled half way up the thigh so a considerable amount of white flesh and knobbly knee was exposed above full length dark blue socks held up by ribbon elastic and displaying a green tag that must have possessed its own term. Thus, a tall six foot Sixth Former really looked rather incongruous – especially on the bus home, a point not lost on fellow passengers from non-military schools! (This was why it was important to smoke to prove we were ‘hard’ – the vogue expression of the time.)**

**In the balcony, however, on Friday mornings sat the much maligned and publicly insulted Non-Conformists. Useless boys who had not the courage to join the full or quasi-military. Or worse, had lapsed and dared leave these auspicious organisations. I always felt they were brave and showed a real streak of independence. A strong group was the Sixth Form Economists, most of whom were regarded as Trotskyists and ‘Reds under the bed’ by Dr Simpson. Bear in mind the times. This was the Cold War. Atom and Hydrogen bombs, Russian tanks ready to roll out of Eastern Europe, huge Soviet bombers up in the air 24/7 waiting to strike and always aggravating NATO defences. Kruschev was in power with Kennedy in The White House.**

**Bigham took over the Friday assemblies. There was flag-parading and troopings of various colours. Even the scouts had something to offer and placed relatively dull-looking flags upon the stage. It was all very grand and solemn. ‘The Colonel’ as he liked to be known had a chequered military history, it turns out. It seems he had served in the RAF during the War but transferred to the Army. There was also a story he put about regarding operations behind German lines, in North Africa, possibly Torbruk. An HCS Military Historian has since claimed to have investigated the presence of William Bigham in North Africa but has found no record of the name. Perhaps Colonel and Mrs Bigham holidayed in Tunisia or Morocco, now and**

again? Whatever, upon his appointment by Dr Simpson, Bigham was encouraged to establish the largest CCF in the UK, complete with a fully-fitted out Pipe Band. (The band actually achieved highly and won major UK awards in its class.) By the time I got to the school, Bigham had been promoted to 'Major'. Certain Staff members with real officer appellations let it be known that his rank was no more than 'Cadet' recognition. He was actually lower than several genuine ex-Wing Commanders and authentic Majors, one of which was dear old, aforementioned Spargo. To our astonishment, Bigham then received further recognition and was promoted to Lt. Colonel, insisting on being known as 'The Colonel'. Well, he would, wouldn't he?

Resplendent in smartly cut Officer parade uniform, shining brass and polished leather belts and, I seem to remember brown boots and swagger stick, the Colonel ran the Friday Assembly. He cut a fine figure and was the only smartly dressed Staff member. In civvies, his suits were also well tailored, putting into the shade the repaired-at-the-elbow Harris Tweed jackets with leather patches of his scruffy colleagues. He also drove a highly polished white Mercedes which he parked in its own private place, near the Biology Lab. This, itself, was unusual in the late-50s/early 60s when those masters who did not cycle, or come in by red bus, drove battered-looking Morris Minors, Austin A30s and spluttering Ford Anglias.

We have to say Bigham cut a dash and knew it. He was a gifted PR man and would have done David Cameron proud in another era except Bigham would have appeared to be the Prime Minister and Cameron his batman/chauffeur. Poor Dr Simpson (it was the only time I felt slight sympathy for him) was forced to announce Bigham's great award. HM The Queen had made him the proud offering of an OBE. Not even an MBE. How galling for Simpson. I well remember how he gritted his teeth and attempted to smile as he congratulated his elevated colleague. Very soon, Staff put it around the OBE was the award for 'Other Buggers Efforts'. Quite so. Bigham possessed a remarkable ability for self-promotion, brand image and the ability to take all the credit from the minions who slaved under him within the ranks of his CCF. For all his pomp, bluster and the savage canings that were so feared, Bigham had an Achilles heel. Whilst cunning, he suffered a fundamental lack

of real intelligence. We all knew he was thick as did his numerous detractors on the Staff. So back to the Friday assembly.

One of his duties was to read out the Notices eg that Choir Practice was cancelled or the meeting of the wonderfully-named Afro-American Music Society (Simpson refused to accept the word 'Jazz') would now be on Tuesday instead of the normal Wednesday. Perfunctory stuff. Thus, I decided to slip in a notice, relying on Bigham's legendary stupidity. Prior to the Assembly, I ventured onto the stage and left a piece of paper for him, at his place on the High Table. The cadets assembled and marched. The scouts ambled in as the non-conformists, crept up to the balcony. From my vantage point, on the floor, I saw Bigham pick up my slip of paper, cursorily gaze at it and place it amongst the other things he had to read out.

My heart was pounding. Two scouting friends, sitting with me, knew what was about to unfold. One was Geoff Routh, hugely rebellious and a greatly gifted artist. The other, Chief of All Rebels, the popular and witty (detested by Simpson) Mick Regan. Bigham pompously worked through his announcements before coming to my innocent little piece of paper. Drawing himself to his full height, dazzling in his gleaming brass, leather, spit and polish, he announced the following:

"Scientific Society. Members will meet today, at 12.30, in Room B5 (a stinking old Chemistry Laboratory.) Final arrangements, payments and travel details will be discussed concerning the forthcoming visit to Grimsby Gasworks."

Now Grimsby is some way from Harrow which had its own fine gasworks close to South Harrow tube station, as I remember. It did not take long for this fact to work its way through a few brains, some of which were on stage, sitting behind Dr Simpson and The Colonel. After a pregnant pause, a stifled laugh was heard in the Hall. It was swiftly followed by others. Personally, I could not look up but I know Routh and Regan were in fits. The school erupted, above all certain younger teachers. Bernie Marchant turned instant puce with ill-concealed mirth. The Colonel shook his head, glared, and commanded silence. We were treated to a lecture on the seriousness of the occasion and that there was nothing amusing in an otherwise uncontroversial

**Assembly notice. He cast a final menacing glare before announcing he would read the notice again. A dire warning was issued. No boy (he did not know about the Staff treachery behind him) would as much as make a sound. "Not a squeak out of any of you. Otherwise the whole school will come back at a quarter to four, for detention. And that includes the Head Boy!"**

**Somehow, there was not a squeak. Hardly a movement. I was curled up, fit to burst. 930 boys held in their emotions as the man solemnly read through the announcement, a second time. Colonel Bigham had been had and was too stupid to know it.**

**Ten minutes later, I sat in his Lower sixth 'Botany' class awaiting his arrival. The students were doing their best to contain themselves knowing he would walk through the door, at any moment, angry as a wounded bear, and prepared to lash out at anyone who dared to snigger. It was over 20 minutes before the door burst open. Bigham strode in clutching my insignificant piece of paper. He was followed by a furious-looking Head of Science, Tom Buswell (actually a decent man in normal circumstances.) They stormed through to the large Prep room where Bigham had tea made for him, at all times, and from where the Cadet Operation was run. There was no Botany lesson that morning – not that there was anything unusual in that!**

**By Breaktime, I had been rumbled. Head Boy Graham Morris (just for once a scout and not a cadet)sought me out and made the accusation. He told me I had been observed putting the paper at Bigham's place. There was no point in denying. A severe caning (of a Sixth Former) loomed. Morris, however, went on to say he was not going to report me as he found the jape amusing and advised me to keep quiet about it. A decent guy, recognised for his good humour and maturity. On reflection, he was taking a risk as the little snitch who 'grassed' on me could also have gone to Bigham. I shall not name the person who would have been automatically dubbed a creep. Save to say that he was the reserve organist of the school and had been sitting at the instrument as I entered from behind the stage. It was a lucky let-off. Yet, in a normal environment, the matter might have been taken light-heartedly and brushed aside. Not so in the Simpson-Bigham Axis. HCS was a deadly serious place where light-heartedness and humour went unrecognised. Some months later, I bowled a wild and nearly decapitating ball at a batsman in the cricket**

nets. It was not deliberate but pure lack of control. Gethin Williams, our 1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket master and Economics teacher, was in charge. He berated me, calling out, "That was a Grimsby Gasworks of a ball, Ward!" How did he know? I asked him as he was trustworthy. "All the Staff knew," he said. We grinned and left it at that!

Gethin Williams is worth consideration as masters like him made up for all the bad practice, threat and thuggery around. Thus far, I have painted a negative picture of HCS, albeit mildly amusing, but there were good things to enjoy and participate in. I remember a flaming red-haired Viking of a man from Scotland; Hector 'Hamish' Sutherland. He came in to do our Fourth Form English. His apparent ferocity and hot temper became the butt of jokes and imitation. But only weeks later he had his 'O' Level Class eating out of his hands. He commanded respect by thoroughly good teaching and insistence on proper behaviour.

Arthur Haley was another good man; a deeply gifted musician who turned round the ruins of the Thorn legacy within a couple of years. I shall never forget his rendition of the Schumann Piano Concerto, accompanied by Roger Bowen playing a transcription of the orchestral parts. It brought the house down at the Summer Concert (1962?) We were so proud of him, a quiet and unassuming person who could perform miracles at the keyboard. Yet Dr Simpson managed to spoil the party. As the concert had over-run, he stood up to quell the applause, announcing that we had enough of that and it was time to go home. Who was this weird, graceless and stunted individual?

I also experienced an unusual piece of thoughtfulness from an English master called Turnbull. He had never taught me but it turned out he had marked my mock 'O' Level Essay paper. I had written about 'The Shop round the Corner.' Not a very promising title but, coincidentally, there just happened to be an eccentric emporium run by a little Jewish guy, up in Harrow Weald where I lived. Turnbull had sensed something in the writing and took the trouble to seek me out, in the corridor. He had never spoken personally to me, before, but intimated that he was impressed with my writing ability. That was all and he left it at that. Perhaps that was the little spark that ignited a deep-seated facility that later flamed in the BBC. The former 'A' Level scrape Botanist at HCS commissioned numerous top writers and scripts and

**acted in an editorial role for years. Thank you, Mr Turnbull. You made me believe. And now, four children's books into retirement, I remain terribly busy with a Musical to come out on the first. (Googling 'Peter Ward Vikings' will explain all.)**

**It was the cricket that was my personal, main thrust. A gritty Northern lad, I had learned my cricket in Yorkshire. 'Tha don't give thy wicket (the Boycottian 'weekit) wi'out a fight!' Except bowling was my thing; fast and inaccurate. 'If tha cannot bowl t'bugger out stick one round 'is 'ead and shake 'im oop!' It was pure Fred Trueman and I was Fred's biggest fan. Cricket at HCS was a different matter; milder and more Middlesex. It was played on a pitch adjacent to the school. The pretentiously named 'Outer Quad' (actually the playground) projected into it. And at Third Man, at the school end, an enormous naval gun threatened visiting batsmen. The cheaply built and ugly whitewashed Dining Hut shortened a decent late cut whilst down in the far corner lurked Jack Warwick's Hut. Groundsman Jack took huge pride in his square (the cricketing sort not the Headmasterly) and provided a good, fast and even track. Jack, himself, was a more than decent Club cricketer, an inveterate smoker and swore like the good old ex-Army trooper he was. He had no respect for stuffy Staff but got on well with the likes of Gethin Williams and the popular 'Uncle Mac' McEwan (in charge of one of the teams.) Jack was generous with his ciggies and encouraged us to come round for the occasional smoke. I write, now, as a totally abstinent smoker of many decades' standing! The cricket had been on the up before I arrived. It was to improve with some of us making it to the Middlesex Grammar Schools XI and County Young Amateurs.**

**Most curiously, Dr Simpson was possibly one of the finest cricketers that ever walked out on the school pitch. He had played for Scotland and an MCC representative side. His batting record was poor but his wicket-keeping rather good. Stumpings and catches figures are definitely to his credit. It seems he must have 'kept' behind the great Don Bradman although I understand the match was interfered with by Scottish wind and rain. Very sadly, I did not arrive in time to see 'Simpson's Last Stand'. I only heard about it but am reliably informed that when batting for the Staff he refused to 'walk' when given out by the umpire. Apparently, he claimed he had not**



been ready for the ball and insisted on a re-run. (The only other recorded incidence of this is the great WG Grace batting for London CCC at the old Crystal Palace ground.) Grace won the day. Simpson did not. The enormously brave teacher umpire insisted his Head returned to the pavilion. Sulking Dr Simpson refused to play for the Staff again. And in my time of four years in the First XI, he failed to turn up to a single match and support the team.

Bernie Marchant, a terrible cricketer turning out in black 'pumps' for the Staff vs Boys match, took over the admin. of fixtures and also ran a junior team. He seemed to be a shy, rather locked in man, but one always felt there was humour deep down and I understand, behind the scenes, he made it clear he was no Simpson worshipper. Bernie gave me out in my last match. By then, I was also a proper batsman and determined to take a century off the Staff. Having knocked up a brisk 35, Gethin Williams bowled a ball that swerved in, took an inside edge off my bat, and went onto my boot. Gethin leapt in the air, appealed and Bernie held up his finger. I WAS NOT OUT LBW! But Bernie had made up his mind. I was furious. It was a Simpsonian moment. However, the ball ricocheted off my boot and flew head-high past second slip whereupon a young master took off to his right and clutched a Test Match standard catch from the air. I WAS OUT - caught! Bernie was incorrect but I felt obliged to walk - unlike the former Scotland wicket keeper!

And so to football. Not the rugby kind which I hated although selected for the school teams (not the Firsts.) The dreaded Soccer. This was the pre-1966 World Cup era (just.) Rugby, the Public Schools' game, was adopted by Simpson shortly after his arrival. Soccer, the game not for gentlemen, was banned. But not altogether. Part of the outer Quad was given over, each Break and Lunchtime, to energetic games. At first with a tennis ball. Then the rash spread to the Inner Quad whereupon tennis balls hammered against the lower ground windows although never knowingly breaking one. Dr Simpson, the greatest 'Square' of his generation, ruined our enjoyment by banning playtime soccer on the pretext of damage to windows. Yet it was less than a week before soccer returned, played with 'air' balls - light plastic objects punctuated with large holes. These could not break windows and,

surprisingly, the re-emergence of soccer was tolerated. The problem with air balls was that they failed to withstand a healthy tackle. Within days, a tatty ball, falling to bits, had to be hacked around the Quad. I think it was Mick Regan and Mick 'Reevo' Reeves who solved the problem. They suggested filling a new ball with screwed up bits of paper torn from exercise books. These provided a solid stuffing and were far more threatening to windows and passing tuck shop consumers than tennis balls.

I recall two special moments. I fired a fine left-footed shot towards goal, beneath the Masters' Common Room. Dickie Head, a former Eagars Chief Spy, pulled off a brilliant save, the ball bouncing off his hand and rocketed skywards. It ended up on the roof of the corridor alongside the new Hall. Head and I decided to go up for it. It meant clambering out of a high window and crawling along the roof. Our efforts were cheered merrily from below but we had not reckoned on a nasty little Prefect spying out of a window. 'Bru' Dixon had recognised us and ten minutes later we were bending over Square's desk for yet another caning.

The finest Inner Quad footballing incident involved a lad called Lewis. 'Lew' to his friends. Along with 'Joshie' Matthews the nearest thing HCS got to the Teddy Boys of the early 50s. 'Lew' was out on his own. An addicted smoker with stained fingers, black suede shoes with crepe rubber soles and the narrowest trousers on the block. Half an inch above 'drainpipe'. He was a regular footballer in the Inner Quad but not particularly good. However 'Lew' enjoyed his 15 minutes of glory. Taking a wild swipe at the ball, his inadequately-tied right shoe parted company with his foot and flew straight through a window. We were stunned by the smashing glass - but not Dr Simpson who happened to be passing down the corridor on his way to morning tea! The offending shoe must have missed him by inches. It was a surreal moment. We gazed, transfixed, at the High Master of the School sticking his head through the shattered shards and ordering the perpetrator to report immediately to his Study for a caning. Only Dr Simpson could rise to such an occasion with such timing and panache!

A quick aside on Inner Quad and Outer Quad Winter activity. In times of freezing snow and ice, the Inner Quad became a skating ring. Not so much a ring; more a long slide. Very long, with boys queuing to whizz along it.

**Snowballing was also the rage. Out on the school field, boys would line up below Kenton Road and snowball passing No.140 buses. One driver was so irate he stopped his bus and got out to berate the attackers. Of course, it was a very foolish thing to do and he ended up covered in snow, racing back to his cab for cover. An official complaint came in from London Transport and we were banned from the field! The Inner Quad posed real difficulties. There were easy and nearby targets. A snowball smashing into one's face from a few yards is not the greatest idea of fun. Thus, snowballing was banned. There were two sides to the argument. Except it carried on! A young master called Thyrwhitt decided to action into his own hands (I gather he is still associated with the Old Gayts.) Mr Thyrwhitt took on the mob. He entered from the far end (cloakrooms) and blew a whistle to get silence. The odd snowball landed near him as he lectured about stupidity/danger/breaking the school rules etc. Thyrwhitt had spoilt the party. One thing he had not worked out and that was his exit strategy. To depart the scene, he had to turn, exposing his back to us. One hundred minds thought alike. Within seconds, Thywhitt was covered in snow as he beat his hasty retreat back to Base where, no doubt, Captain Scott revived him with gulps of brandy supplied by a Pyrenean Mountain Dog!**

**The Football thing went further. Outer Quad footballers, run by a fellow called Atkinson, came up with idea of playing a 'real' soccer match against an opposing school. 'Atki', I don't recall his true name, rather bravely approached the PE master of the Private school across Gayton Road. A match was arranged in a Recreation Ground where they had their pitch. Some of the Inner Quad footballers joined in and the scratch team appeared in differently coloured House shirts, blue, black or white shorts to face a truly professional bunch looking great in their school colours. We won 6 - 0. I still sense the thrill of sticking in a near post header from a corner. It was a great team achievement. A return was agreed and this time we took the Private school 10-4. Harrow County soccer was on the map. Atki had done it great service. He left that year and so it fell to me to organise a new team and get people to ask around for fixtures. These flooded in. Still looking like a bunch of tramps on muddy Kenton Rec. we secured our first victory of that season over a well kitted out Jewish Youth Club from Wembley. Scoreline - 16-0. In the match, I put in a double hat-trick for the first and last time.**

**From that point, and for a further season, things just got better and better. We won every single match in the 1962-63 season that was miserably blighted by three months' snow and hard frozen ice. Nevertheless, we managed to pick up top fixtures such as Harrow Weald Grammar School (0-0 and 2-0 in our favour.) Abbotsfield School – again a big win and the magnificent match against Harrow Technical College who were 2-0 up in no time against a weakened team and threatened to run away with it. The score finished 6-3 to ...no, not Harrow County School but Gayton Rovers! The name was an insurance policy against the wrath of the school that surely had to come. Why Rovers? This reflected my (by now) lifelong love affair with Doncaster Rovers. And we played in red and white, not HCS green and pale blue. Again, Donny Rovers were the inspiration. Shirts were knocked up very cheaply by a father, a Jewish tailor. And we went back to him for a further set when the Junior Gayton Rovers started up. They, too, enjoyed many splendid victories.**

**We had proved a point to the blinkered thinking of the HCS regime and PE department. On any Winter Saturday morning, an estimated 110 boys represented the school in rugby and cross country. That left a further 820 doing nothing. Why no hockey, for goodness sake? School Sports were being run solely for the prestige of the institution. Participation by the many did not come into the equation or bone-headed thinking. Finally, word got through to Gordon Underwood, Head of PE. I was summoned for a severe dressing down (by now a Prefect in the Upper Sixth.) We were accused of playing a lower orders game in the name of HCS. I was told that if I wanted to play soccer I could leave and attend the nearest Secondary Modern school. In reply, I explained that we played under our own name. Underwood responded that we were taking the school colours. We played in red and white. He was growing angry. The PE supremo was concerned that some of his rugby players might desert their true calling on Saturday mornings. We played on Sunday afternoons. And finally, piece de la resistance his finest rugby player, Tim Rutter, Middlesex County and England U19s had been discovered turning out for us! On a Sunday afternoon, I politely explained Tim was an excellent footballer and what he did in his spare time, over a week end, was his own business. Underwood raged and fumed. I was told that we would not get away with the outrage and that one day, coming soon, (I**

quote) "I shall have your guts for garters!" But there was nothing he could do. We sailed gaily on.

To the modern reader, this might appear totally bizarre. Certainly to the multi-sports school that is now housed and extended on the old site. It represents the desperate measures teenage boys had to go to fulfil their natural sporting abilities and aptitudes. We should have been encouraged, not threatened. Matters had to be taken into our own hands. A few names... wonderful footballers... my apologies to the many I can no longer recall. Graham Reeve, Tony Arkey, Frank Tyrell, Harry Levine, Roger Bowman, Terry Brigden, Keith Taylor (referee), Mick Udall, Dave Godleman, Stuart Thompson and a lad called Searle (both joined in the Sixth Form from the dreaded Secondary Moderns where they had played soccer!) These two took the team to new levels. There were others. The memory fades.

And nearly finally, to the infamous year 1959 -60. The year after the departure of the dreaded Thorn and the unfortunate elevation of the decent and harmless Billy Duke to Deputy Headmaster – no doubt to boost his pension as he had only a short time to go. Perhaps with Thorn at the helm of the Wheel of Cruelty the big rebellion might not have taken place. Who knows? It was certainly on the cards and waiting to happen.

Crucially, Dr Simpson seemed to have taken a turn for the worse and become even more manic and vindictive. An unusually bright mob had failed to bypass the Fifth Form because of insufficient 'O' Levels. They ended up in three Forms; Vi, V2 and V3. An unpleasant Simpson touch was that Sixth Formers would wear bright gold bands on their school caps. Fifth Formers, pale blue. This was no recognition of seniority. It was a mild form of deliberate differentiation along Star of David lines, in Nazi Germany. A mark of 'failure' and we resented it. On the first day, we were publicly lampooned and labelled no-hopers. The insult went deep. Maybe not much would have happened but for an irrepressible character named Mick Regan. A natural rebel and son of the even more outrageous Jim Regan of South Harrow Cricket School fame, Mick seemed to have an eye for conflict and forcing the Head and his entourage on the backfoot. He was almost creative in his mischievous planning. Looking back, it can of course be argued as the immature misbehaviour of resentful teenagers. But Mick Regan was too smart

for that. He seemed to know how to strike at the heart of the alien Empire causing maximum irritation.

It took the Dining Room women some time to work out that spoons were disappearing from under their noses. The Great Spoon Shortage continued despite prefectorial spot checks and pocket searches. What no one had realised that extra spoons were being snaffled when collecting food. Used spoons were dutifully returned but spare ones were passed along the line to the windows where they were secretly dropped out. After school, we would creep round the outside of the Dining Hut and collect the fresh day's haul. Very foolishly, these were then deposited in three empty desks in the Fifth Form rooms.

After a time, the remaining spoons became almost impossible to smuggle away so attention was turned to salt and pepper pots. Within days, these essential commodities disappeared causing upset and anger. Attention was then turned to the school bells. A hazardous and notably foolish operation as these acted as fire warnings. Of course, half the school would find itself delayed at Break and Lunchtimes as everything ran by the bell. One morning, we heard that a raid was underway. It was like a Gestapo swoop and carried out by keen prefects. Panic set in. Several of us, in shifts, dived into the vacant desks stuffing our pockets with kitchen utensils and bells before haring off to the bike sheds. An enormous pile grew up behind. Fortunately, by the time of arrival of the Hit Squad all signs of theft and accumulation had disappeared and we were unable to aid the investigation.

Regan's next plan was to cycle to Watford with the spoons. About six of us supported Watford FC in the old Third Division North and always went by bike, rain or shine. Mick had selected Watford as it contained the domicile of the retired George Thorn. Most had been on the end of his caning or cuddling. The idea was to raid his garden, at night, and plant the spoons in his lawn. Regan imagined Thorn opening the curtains, on a Sunday morning, looking out on an array of silver spoons growing like tulips. Sadly, the major pile of loot behind the bike sheds was discovered so the operation never took place. However, a small number of spoons survived. Regan's next plan was audacious as it was insensitive and bold. I was supposed to be in on the act but I caught 'flu and was out for a few days. To put it mildly, that was most

fortuitous. A Scouts' 'night game' had been arranged somewhere down by the Rickmansworth canal, near Harefield. This largely implied groups of scouts following map references in the dark to beat each other up. Red or blue wool was worn on the upper arm. If your enemy managed to pull it off you were dead. It was all highly intelligent.

Unfortunately, Regan, Pete Hoggan, Pete Wollard and Geoff Routh managed to find themselves close to dear old Spargo Rawnsley's canal barge – his permanent living place with 'Mrs Spargo'. In the morning, the band of four crept over to the barge, loosened the moorings and cast it off into the canal. This caused consternation aboard. Spargo appeared on deck, justifiably angry, whilst the boys hid behind a disused railway platform. From this, they sent V-signs, fingers appearing over the top of the parapet. But they were dealing with a quick thinking War veteran and Fighter Ace. Spargo pinned them down with high power binoculars and was eventually able to identify the culprits. Worse was to come.

Next day, the Regan, Hoggan, Routh and, I believe, 'Bunny' Warren went up to the school, in the afternoon, knowing that the Memorial Service for the Reverend Randall Williams, former Headmaster, was taking place. The Hall was packed with notable dignitaries. Apparently, Dr Simpson bade farewell to the Mayor and Mayoress of Harrow and set out for his car, a Ford Sedan. He drove sedately out of the front gate completely unaware that a string of Dining Hall spoons danced in his wake. He was later flagged down in the lower reaches of Sheepcote Road to be apprised of the situation. Spoons was one thing. Casting off an old master and his wife on their barge another. But desecrating a Memorial Service was the final straw.

I had recovered by the Monday and was able to go in. There was something noticeably grim and menacing about the Assembly. A very serious Simpson catalogued the outrages of the week end. We knew not to laugh. He announced that all teaching of the Fifth Form would cease until further notice. Colonel Bigham would be in charge of the interrogations. Could they be serious? Despite the most awful threats, no information was revealed on the Monday other than the naming of the canal boat pushers. Tuesday dragged on. No teaching; no lessons. It became clear that two somewhat 'goody' individuals were getting fed up with disruption to their major 'O'

**Level Year. All the Fifth Form knew names and the people behind the 'spoon incidents' and various other misdemeanours. We were convinced we were about to be welched on. There was no alternative. We had to cough and get it over and done with.**

**Punishments were severe. Routh, Regan, Woollard, Warren and Hoggan were paraded on the stage and humiliated as the vilest scum on Earth. I was so lucky that the 'flu had prevented me participating in the worst two crimes. About fifteen of us were rounded up for a whole host of past actions, caned and then made to suffer public humiliation bordering on Mao's Chinese Cultural Revolution. For three weeks, we were ordered to act as dustmen and spend our time, during Break and Lunchtime, going round the playgrounds picking up litter. The amount unquestionably increased during this period. Our peers were making a point. From that time on, overt rebellion virtually ceased but more covert and better thought out stuff continued. 'O' Levels and the Sixth Form beckoned. It was time to grow up.**

**Over the next two years, Dr Simpson seemed to lose heart and retired more and more into his study. Poor old Billy Duke was played out and must have regretted his promotion. He was no Simpson fan and probably understood the adolescent reasoning behind the troubles.**

**We are nearly there. Next, the Scouts. A huge group of about 250 boys was divided into four Troops; Merryman, Foresters, Pathfinders and Pioneers. The whole was known as The 4<sup>th</sup> Harrow. A Group Scoutmaster was in overall charge. He was an amusing schoolmaster who was greatly liked. I can't remember his surname but his nickname was the rather dubious 'Faerie'. But I think we can pass over that. The Troops had their own characteristics. I had joined the Pathfinders – horribly 'keen' and competitive. Anxious for their mothers to sew on ever more badges. Some even made it to Queen's Scout. The Foresters and Pathfinders seemed to have things about right. Keen enough but not fanatical. It was the Merryman who were a law unto themselves. The Junior Troop was notoriously behind the others on badges and awards. Its Senior Section was commonly called the 'Youth Club' by the rest and despised. Geoff Routh, Pete Hoggan, Pete Woollard and I came to the conclusion that we would leave our Troops and apply to the non-Scouting Merryman. We were welcomed aboard. The Scoutmaster rarely**



turned up but got interested when Summer Camp was on the horizon. This meant a free trip, taking with him his attractive girlfriend. As we ended up camping under the North Face of The Eiger, we were not complaining.

With no 'adult' in charge (they started at 21 in those days) we were left to our own devices in the salubrious old stable, at Scout Park, the Merryman had made for themselves. There were mice in the old, dilapidated thrown out sofas. Snooker was available as were darts, fags for those who did and bottles of brown ale made an appearance. Baden-Powell would have been proud of us. No badges were ever worked for and the thought of becoming a Queen's Scout was beyond the pail. In the absence of official leadership, Michael Portillo's oldest brother Charlie seemed to be roughly in the key role. Charlie was exceptionally easy-going and pleasant, backed up by an equally relaxed crew. One of these is a current HCS alumnus, Bob Garrett, Professor and Consultant of all sorts of things in South Africa. Bob became School Captain. It was not clear why and certainly did not relate to his scouting lack of achievement. But he did it very well. A bonus of joining the Merryman was the Canal Boat cruise organised by Richard Lee. Richard had caught the idea off his mighty keen brother 'Bruiser' who ran the ultra-keen Pathfinders. However, Richard did not suffer the same tendencies. The Merryman canal cruises were light-hearted, rather ad hoc and delightful. One year, to Banbury up the Oxford Canal, negotiating locks and tunnels along the Grand Union. It was after an adventure in a pub that one of the crew fell into a deep lock, at midnight. No one bothered to rescue him as he splashed around for help. We simply enquired if he could swim. Having received the answer in the positive we told him to swim out - which he promptly did. No heroic scouting in the Merryman! The following year, we went up the Leicester Canal. Taking on a local darts team in a canal side pub, the guys told us that Manchester Utd. were playing Leicester City at Filbert St., next day. We moored outside the ground, stood by the half-way line and saw the finest possible match. Leicester were then second in the old First Division. Man. Utd. were just scraping out of the relegation zone. Without knowing it at the time, we were watching a pre-run of the 1963 Cup Final. Our result? 4-3 to Utd. including a Denis Law hat trick. Bobby Charlton was playing. But for me a bonus - my old Doncaster Rovers hero Harry Gregg was in goal for Utd. Indeed, Gregg was a hero. Five years previously, he had dashed back into the flaming

wreckage of the Munich disaster aircraft to rescue a Yugoslav mother and her baby.

The Merry men were the antithesis of the Simpson regime. Cool, amusing, relaxed yet adventurous. But, because of the pervading ethos of the time, generally despised by the other Scout Troops. For me, no complaints! How they arose and survived in the midst of that unhappy atmosphere remains a mystery. The Merry men could have taught the school a thing or two but no one would have listened.

Finally, the HCS Caning Record Book. In theory, each episode of corporal punishment had to be entered into the punishment book. Most brutalities were not reported and probably broke the existing laws of the land. In the Lower Sixth, Regan, Routh and I hatched up a plan to commandeer the book. Our names appeared in it, along with many of our colleagues. We decided to use our 'free period' time to raid Simpson's study. Unfortunately, Routh's Art, Regan's Economics and my Science never seemed to overlap. One day, I happened to notice Simpson's car was missing from the car park. I was free and not 'private studying' in the Library so I decided to go it alone. Approaching his study door, beneath The Clock, I looked round the staircases for interlopers. All seemed quiet. Cyril Atkins, the Secretary (one of the really civilised people) had closed his door opposite Square's. Gingerly, I tried the handle, opened the door carefully and was immediately struck by the thick haze of cigarette smoke and heat from the gas fire. As predicted, Simpson was not at his desk. That was the first thing to ascertain. I knew where the black-covered exercise book resided in the bookcase. And then – horror of horrors – I had made an appalling error. Dr Simpson was not out of the school. He was in his Study, sitting by the heat of the fire, a Latin book open on his lap...fast asleep. I beat a hasty retreat! It was some weeks before I tried again, double-checking that Square was indeed out of school. This time it was a quick in and out concealing the treasure under my black blazer.

I kept the book for over 40 years. The entries were wonderfully incongruous and are now available on the Web. In turning it over to the Old Gayts I had to ask that names be blotted out on-line, although not from the original. This is a shame as names bring back characters. The problem was that a few items were genuine 'crimes' such as the purloining of the Cadet Fund by three of

**my Year mates. Also, there were other more minor offences such as petty thieving and lying to masters. It did not seem fair that the culprits should be spread all over the Net, forty years on. We all did silly things and made mistakes. That said, I understand the book will have pride of place in the HCS Museum, under construction. It is worth reading and a truly historical document representing an age, attitudes and behaviour that, by today's standards, appear barbaric.**

**It is an interesting thought that perhaps half of the Staff of my time would have ended up inside, under today's legislation. Dr Simpson would never have passed an OFSTED inspection and the school placed in Special Measures. His school was already seriously out of date by the time I got to it in the late-50s and he made the mistake of trying to enforce this situation against all the odds and mounting opposition, some of it from the Staff. Yet his Staff was considerably acquiescent despite any private feelings. That, too, would have been a feature of the time just as the boys would never have run home to report bullying. Of course, certain key figures had been there years and a few contributed to the overall fossilisation and corruption. Younger, decent teachers were probably keener to get good CVs and get out as soon as possible. Speaking out of turn would have been a brave act.**

**In just one sense, I am almost grateful to Dr Simpson and his overbearing Regime. It taught me to not take things lying down. This stood me in good stead in many subsequent professional situations when I suspected injustices and persecution of colleagues. I spoke out.**

**Do you know? I could almost thank the man!**

**Peter Ward July 2011**