

First Days at Aldwickbury

It is hard to believe that sixty two years have passed since I and some seventy or eighty other excited Lea House boys arrived at Aldwickbury for the first time. Whilst the modern Aldwickbury spreads over a great range of building and facilities, in 1948 the only buildings on the site were the main house and the stable block. Yet to us the 'new school' with its spacious grounds seemed vast after the cramped premises we had occupied in the old school in Ox Lane. We were especially fascinated by the mysterious grotto which opened from the conservatory and were very disappointed that this was strictly 'out of bounds'.

If my memory serves me right, boarders were not introduced until the following year but the wind of change was blowing as Saturday morning classes were soon introduced and there were daily games sessions. The immaculate playing fields which boys enjoy today were still recovering from having been ploughed up during the war years to produce vegetables. There was however a single mowed grass path across the centre of the field along which the previous owner had been 'exercised' in her wheelchair and this provided the first eleven with a reasonable wicket when the season opened after Easter.

All of us stayed to lunch at school. Rationing from the war years was still in existence and I think one might describe our meals as 'simple'. One particularly revolting pudding was cocoa-flavoured sago, which Captain Castle – joint headmaster with Brian Chidell – always attacked with great enthusiasm with the words 'now for a good wallow in the Thames mud'! I remember also trips to London for senior boys to attend the Earnest Reed Concerts for young people at the Westminster Central Hall. We went in parties of six in Mr Chidell's old Talbot and it was always his hope on the return journey that he would be able to get a clear run up Holywell Hill in St Albans and achieve the summit without having to change gear. I can imagine the horror of 'Health and Safety' these days at witnessing the car careering up the hill with six un-seat belted schoolboys leaning over the front seats urging the driver on!

Those early days of Aldwickbury were immensely happy and I owe a great deal to a school which gave me such a good academic grounding and more importantly taught me about kindness, good manners and my responsibilities as a good citizen. In these respects Aldwickbury has not changed at all.

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