**The Beginning – Second Form 1968- 69**

So there I was on the main concourse of Waterloo station, A947, dressed in school uniform complete with short trousers looking for a master to report to before catching the Basingstoke train to Winchfield. A week or so earlier my school trunk had been sent off as luggage in advance but I was dressed in the regulation tweed jacket, school tie and, for about the only time, my school cap. There were other boys about who looked similarly dressed so I made my way to a group waiting for the departure platform to be announced. All told there appeared to be some 60 – 75 boys waiting for the train with assorted hand luggage and some with pet animals..

On joining the group I received my first advice; get rid of the cap and have you got any long trousers, which was when I first noticed that I was the only boy in grey short trousers! Faces were a blur but I soon found myself on the train where over the next 50 minutes a metamorphosis overcame a further 50 or so fellow travellers as they changed from ordinary clothes to school uniform. These were older boys who were too cool to travel from home back to school in uniform. On subsequent trips back to school I noticed that it was also necessary for some boys to remove their holiday beards and moustaches before de-bussing at Winchfield.

On arrival at Winchfield station it seemed that over 100 boys detrained in the male equivalent of St Trinians and made their way onto 4 or 5 coaches. These were for the separate boarding houses and the Junior House coach was my conveyance. The journey from the station established very quickly how far from civilisation the school was, apart from Odiham there seemed to be no settlements in this part of Hampshire!

JH (Junior House) was, and still is, a dark red-brown brick building that looked forboding – it was going to be my new home for a year as I was starting my life at LWC in the second form. There it was stuck out in the middle of fields miles from anywhere and I was used to the urban form of north London. Not even the great out doors of Hampstead Heath could prepare you for the vacant vastness of Long Sutton. From what I remember there were about 70 boys in JH and only four dorms. What a first sight they were, long open plan rooms with a row of beds each with a top red blanket regularly spaced down either side. They made superb hurdling tracks although the build up of speed and forward momentum towards the end of the run resulted in a heavy crash into the wall at the end of the line. My dorm was for new boys in both the first and second years. In the best traditions we were allocated beds alphabetically. To my right were Ray Coop and Henry Dickie, to my left Alan Fischer and Rob Fisher. Elsewhere were Pierre King and Tony Jackson who became my immediate friends in the second year.

The Housemaster was Bod, aka Mr Tweddie-Stoddart. Assistant masters were Borry Jackson (real name Barry but he came from up north and pronounced the a as an o) and Louie Issac (real name Chris). Matron was also an important figure but she didn’t appear to have a christian or surname, at least not to the boys. First impressions of the staff gave no cause for alarm.

As new boys we were soon initiated into JH life, rules and customs. First there was the ranking of privilege, OGP had predominance, SFP next and first years were the lowest form of life (OGP – old guys privilege which gave those boys who had lived through the first year the ability to evict anyone else from the best seats in the TV room, SFP – allowed new second formers to pull rank over first years. Physical strength and presence would otherwise sort out disputes in each group). Second there was the ritual of regular bog flushing, a common occurrence which probably accounted for the complete absence of headlice! Third there was prep. The prep rooms were as visually exciting as the dorms, long rooms with a long work surface down three walls. Everyone had a locker, shelf and stool and this was where after lesson study took place in the evenings and at weekends.

JH had its own dining room for breakfast and tea, lunch was taken in the main school dining room. There were also playing fields and swimming pool for exclusive use of juniors. The detached location of JH meant that juniors walked every day to the main complex past the “sewy”, the then functioning sewage farm, and estate workers cottages. None of the modern day separate footpath/cycletrack. Former juniors of the time may recall the pungent aroma of that locality which hung in the air whatever the weather conditions. On the subject of weather when it did rain and there was any wind it always seemed that the rain fell horizontally and cut through whatever coat you were wearing. Or perhaps this is my own false recollection fuelled by the ever present blizzard fencing erected every autumn in the fields opposite JH. The mere erection of this fencing encouraged the formation of snow clouds.

The key characters at JH in the year 1968/69 were undoubtedly the sports stars and anyone else with attitude or character. Dunc Smith, Guy Austin, Kim Ridgeon, Mark Whiting, Nige Reynolds, Brian Land, Rick Schofield were stalwarts of the rugby team – Dunc Smith was in fact a stalwart of any sports team – all helped by being in their second year. Then there where characters like Anthony Packe (specialised in being scruffy, late, forgetful and misplacing everything – ink blots on his clothes and person appeared to be part of his school uniform), Nick West (and the never to be forgotten the Old Heads coming joke). Monty, from Newcastle with the famed accent more Norwegian than geordie, never appeared too happy and there were regular whiprounds to sponsor his running away home attempts! Me? well I spent my early months regularly being wound up and provoked into losing my temper – the usual schoolboy provocation – until realisation dawned that the more I reacted the more frequently it occurred and it was best not to rise to the bait.

Letters home throw light on life at LWC. The first thing that had to be sorted out was the urgent need for long trousers, particularly with the micro-climate at Long Sutton. The second thing of importance appeared to be the junior YFC and the fact that we were allowed pets. Pigeons were available for 2/6 (12.5p), coming from London I wasn’t really interested in them but by the end of the winter term I had a rabbit called Josephine and a guinea pig called Smudge. Thanks are due to Michael Vann who lived locally and looked after them at half term. Apart from the everyday feeding and cleaning the next most important task was ensuring that Esso, a buck rabbit who frequently escaped from his hutch, came nowhere near a doe. The consequences were all too obvious. Membership of junior YFC meant you could have your own garden plot and grow vegetables for your rabbits etc. My YFC activities made a good impression on my House Tutor who reported them in glowing terms in my end of year report.

Sport was, and still is, a major part of life at LWC. At JH the winter term’s sport was rugger, the senior school played rugby. I am not sure there was any difference but it is quite clear from The Sower for 1969 that juniors played rugger not rugby. About my earliest recollection of rugger was when we were practising and the winger had the ball and was running down the touchline, the coach from the First XV was shouting from the touchline “Hit him Spriggs, hit him”. Terry Spriggs duly gave him a right or left hook and the ball was knocked on! I don’t remember the coach’s next words but it always seemed to me that Spriggs was following his advice. My first competitive match was against Reading School who beat us 35-3. The Sower records that “much was learnt from this match and through concentration on picking the ball up in the loose and playing a fast open game the side developed into a good attacking XV in which both the scrum and the outsides played their part”. The team won the next four matches and then lost the last one. I can’t remember how many I played, probably the two defeats!

Spring term was cross country running, the Hong Kong flu epidemic decimated the programme. The half term break was postponed a week. Also by the 3rd February 1969 the long awaited snow to go with the blizzard fencing had arrived. It was during cross country runs that boys could really appreciate the natural beauty around LWC as you ran through ploughed fields ankle deep in thick soil when you gained two or three inches in height from the soil adhered to your pumps or along the woodland rides shin deep in muddy water. No Nike or Reebok trainers then, we generally ran in pumps (plimsolls). Bod the JH housemaster took Cross Country running very seriously which was more than could be said for most of the juniors. However there were some who occasionally joined him on a run outside normal games sessions. This was jogging before it became fashionable.

Summer term was cricket with matches played on the artificial pitch – a concrete strip covered with cocoa matting. I enjoyed playing cricket but didn’t make the U13 XI. Letters home proudly record the 5 not outs and the odd catch in inter house matches – my bowling doesn’t appear to have been successful in getting wickets. Nevertheless there was plenty of opportunity to practice in the nets. Tony Jackson used to bowl to me a lot because when he batted and I bowled the ball invariably hit him and he found it too painful. In later years when Tony used to bowl he would try batting again but with the same result, eventualy it wouldn’t come to the nets with me anymore. With hindsight it was probably my bowling that was the problem not Tone’s batting technique. Whenever he could he would play tennis in preference. Swimming and athletics made up the usual summer games. St Nicholas – my house, lead by Dunc Smith, won the House athletics championship.

Bod, being of scottish extraction, did not follow cricket and encouraged JH to play pudex – a mixture of rounders and softball. It was the sort of game where everyone got a go and appeared to last all afternoon. Every year The Sternians organise a match or two at the reunion but somehow it fails to conjure up the youthful spirit of carefree afternoons.

The highlight of the summer term was undoubtedly the Oliver! production. The workhouse boys and Fagin’s gang was made up of JH boys – me included, with Gary Kaye as Oliver and John O’Gorman as the Artful Dodger. Bill Bucknell was appropriately terrifying as Bill Sykes. Having joined the choir early in the year as a treble I shared a strawberry sellers role with another boy. This required us to sing at the top of our treble voices “Ripe Strawberries, Ripe!”. Having learnt the words and been fitted with the costume I ended up miming on stage as by May my voice had begun to break which was fine for the Workhouse and Fagin’s gangs but not very impressive as a girl strawberry seller. Oliver! was a good production and I still have the photographs. Another highlight of the summer term was the main barn at the farm catching fire and JH boys assisting in dispatching the rats escaping the burning barn.

Life in a dorm was great fun, endless dorm raiding, scragging other boys beds, apple pie beds and pillow fights. Invariably miscreants were taken to task by Bod or other house tutors. Early on Borry Jackson had occassion to administer his baseball boot to everyone in my dorm. We all lined up and the first one received his ration. In the big open corridor the sound echoed around. However it was patently obvious that Borry’s technique sounded worse than it felt. This prompted Tony Jackson to enquire whether Borry had done it yet, which resulted in a further three strokes being administered. Bod, on the otherhand had both the technique and the right implement and his casual quip of “see me for a cosy tail” was a master of understatement. On one occasion all boys in the dorm got a “cosy tail” for sleeping on the floor as Bod did not see our point of view that the floor was softer than the beds!

My end of year report makes ineresting reading. I came top in Latin, Divinity and Geography. The first two have been no use to me in my subsequent career as a Town Planner but the later must have had a big influence although I don’t think I had any inkling at the time. As the end of term drew near we had to choose our Senior House. I chose Hazelveare – for some reason no one chose School House that year. Founders Day and prize giving came and we all went home. Three weeks later three men landed on the Moon. Momentous times indeed!

**Ian Ellis (A947)
Hazelveare 1974**