

## Wintersloe School

Wintersloe School was a middle-class private school which operated between 1896 and 1931 at 17 Wake Green Road, Moseley (Fig.1).<sup>1</sup>

**Fig.1: Wintersloe in the early Twentieth Century and 'Today'.<sup>2</sup>**



The school issued magazines, copies of which from 1911 to 1931 were donated to the Moseley Society by Gordon Sproston, a pupil of the school from 1919 to 1926, along with other items (Figs.5-6, No.14) (Biography below)(Fig.2).<sup>1</sup> In 2021 descendants of Mr Sampson Howard Fisher, the Principal of Wintersloe School, kindly shared information, photographs and an autobiography, *Beyond the Bridge*, by J. P. Stevenson, an Old Winterslovian.<sup>1</sup> The Sproston and Fisher Family items offer a fascinating insights into the life of the school, the people and pupils involved, contemporary middle-class attitudes to education, and the impact of local, national and international events over a particular time in history.

**Fig.2: The Front Cover: The Wintersloe School Magazine, June 1911.**



Wintersloe was a fourteen-roomed detached property erected in 1881. Such large Victorian houses in Moseley lent themselves to development as schools. The name Wintersloe above the door meant 'Blackthorn'. Sampson Howard Fisher, who preferred to be known as Howard Fisher, Wintersloe's Principal, was born in 1869 in Birmingham. His family came from the Bockleton, Pudlton and Kimbolton area near Leominster, but in the **1871** Census he is recorded at the age

<sup>1</sup> Wintersloe is next door to what is now Sorrento Court, which was originally Sorrento, a well-to-do detached property set in large grounds.

<sup>2</sup> Wintersloe in the early twentieth century courtesy of the Fisher family. Wintersloe 'Today' courtesy of Roy Cockel.

of two years as living at 11 St Mary's Street, Ladywood, with his engineer father, Thomas, aged forty-four years, his mother, Sarah, aged thirty-eight years and four older brothers, Frank, Hubert, Harrold and Thomas. Ten years later in **1881** the family were living at 29 Noel Road, Edgbaston. The father was then an iron founder and engineer, Frank was an undergraduate, Hubert an engineer clerk, Harold an engineer and the youngest, Thomas, a scholar. Howard was educated at King Edward's, Birmingham, and then, in 1890, took a BA at London University coming thirteenth in the list of candidates who obtained honours in Classics.<sup>3</sup> By **1891** when he was twenty-two years of age, Howard was working as a private teacher of languages and mathematics and living with his widowed mother at 87 Summerfield Crescent, Edgbaston, along with a paying lodger, Thomas Johnson, an organist and music teacher.

**Fig.4: Wintersloe Drawing Room, date unknown, c.1920s.<sup>4</sup>**



By **1901**, Howard's mother, Sarah, was living at Wintersloe with various others including two nephews, E. Fisher aged fifteen years, an ironmonger's assistant, Harold Fisher, a scholar, Cyril Fox, a visitor who was a single school master aged twenty-six, Eva Edwards, aged twenty-five, single and also a visitor, and two school boy boarders, Charles W. and Henry R. Schwaben, aged fourteen and eleven. C.W. Schwaben appears on the Wintersloe Honours Board as having passed the King Edward High School (KEHS) Entrance Examination in 1901 (Fig.28). In **1901** Howard Fisher, a 'School Master Private School', was living at 19 Clarence Road, Moseley, with his wife, Amy Kate, aged twenty-seven years, a Birmingham girl, and three daughters, Kathleen Amy (four years), Bronwen Joan (two years) and Sybil Gertrude (eleven months), and a 'Lady's Help'. A 1900 advertisement in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, gives S. Howard Fisher B.A as the Principal of Wintersloe School. Howard's mother, Sarah died in 1906 at Wintersloe.<sup>5</sup> In **1911** the census records Howard Fisher as living at 17 Wake Green Road (Wintersloe) as a 'Private School Master' with his wife Amy, Kathleen (fourteen) Bronwen (twelve), Sybil (ten), and two sons, Cedric Howard (seven), and Idwal Thomas (seven months). Eva Mary Edwards was still living there along with two boarders, Thomas Dalton Edwards (nine years) and Eric Bryan (ten years), and another

<sup>3</sup> *Moseley Parish Magazine*, 1933. An article reporting on the dedication of the Lych Gate, St Mary's Church, Moseley, by the Archdeacon of Birmingham on Saturday 8 January. Courtesy of the Fisher family.

<sup>4</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

<sup>5</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family: from notes on the family made by Cedric Fisher.

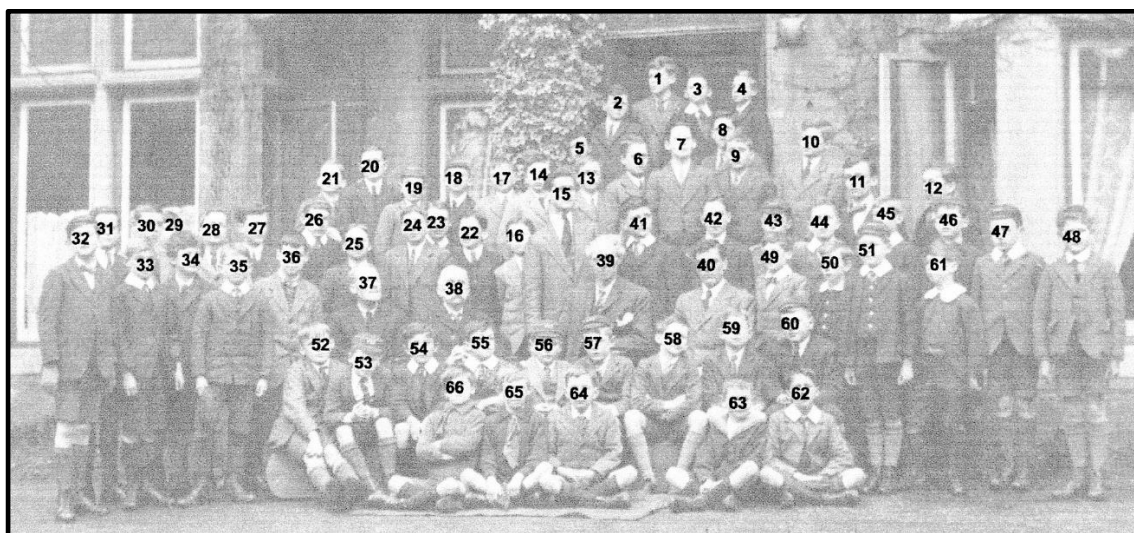


boarder, Valentine Leonard Knight (twenty-one years), an Assistant Schoolmaster. Wintersloe was, then, both a home and a school (Fig.4).

**Fig.5: Wintersloe School, 1920.<sup>6</sup>**



**Fig.6: Wintersloe School, 1920: Key.**



Howard Fisher adopted his family motto for Wintersloe School - '*Virtutem Extendere Factis*', meaning '*To spread abroad manly strength by deeds*' (VEF), which the boys termed 'Vinegar Every Friday', according to Sidney Cook, a clothing manufacturer,

<sup>6</sup> MSHGC. This photograph is displayed at the Moseley Society History Group base at the All Services Club, Church Road, Moseley.

who entered the school in 1915 (Figs.5-6:No.13).<sup>7</sup> Howard Fisher can be seen seated, aged fifty-one years, in the centre of the 1920 school photograph with a handkerchief stylishly displayed in his left breast pocket (Figs.5-6: No.39). The school roll was small, varying between fifty and sixty-three pupils. All pupils wore a uniform of a cap with badge, tie, blazer, large, detachable 'Eton' shirt collar worn over the lapels, a waistcoat under the jacket for extra warmth on colder days, leather ankle boots and knee length trousers with long socks for younger boys. Wintersloe was a private school providing a 'liberal education' plus Latin and Greek up to eighteen or nineteen years of age and preparing upper and upper-middle class boys for university and the older professions. Wintersloe was 'a very good school indeed' and 'one of the principal schools in the area', according to Sidney Cook. Patrick Stevenson stated that the fees 'were not so high as to make the school uniform a parent's status symbol' and described the school as 'a rather aloof little community'.

Sidney Cook remembers Mr Fisher as a very good master, but 'he beat me unmercifully at times' - 'whackings for nothing at all'. Patrick Stevenson says that Mr Fisher presided 'upstairs, in a large classroom that looked out front and back on trees' and where the whole school assembled for morning prayers:

On the walls were yellowing photographs of the Colosseum, the Forum, the Arch of Constantine and other non-Catholic landmarks of the Eternal City. On the mantelpiece was a bust of Julius Caesar, whom Fisher vaguely resembled ... The walls spoke of Rome, but the syllabus smacked of Sparta'.

A range of staff supported Mr Fisher over the years. Four of these appear on the school photo: Mr J.A. Greenhalgh (History: No.37), Mr T. Johnson (Music: No.38), H. Verralls (Geography: No.40) and P.D. Thompson (Musician: No.42). Mr Murray B. Blaydon, who was with the school for many years, retired in July 1931. He was a visiting art teacher sent by the Birmingham School of Art and is also listed under 'Occasional Staff' (1921-1930) at The Moseley Municipal School of Art, Balsall Heath.<sup>8</sup> Patrick Stevenson wrote:

Latin and mathematics bulked large; but downstairs in a long gloomy room with twelve pictures depicting the Signs of the Zodiac, a rather down-at-heel usher called Mr Greenhalgh taught us geography, history and handwriting (which I never really mastered then, or since). In the library (wood-lined and sunny) a supercilious bronzed young man taught, I forget what. He had had tropical experience of handling coloured workers. The idea that they were human beings had never, I would say, crossed his mind, and his attitude rubbed off onto us. Ironically, I remember him mainly as conducting our Saturday morning trip to a gymnasium in Balsall Heath, now one of Birmingham's main West Indian centres. French was taught by visitors: by a Monsieur Dubois, who wore spats; and latterly by a beery adventurer who I liked and really learned from. He taught us to sing *Le roi d'Yvetot* – I still sing it in the bath – and I suppose that my tolerant view of Napoleon dates from the Beranger poems that we learned from him.

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<sup>7</sup> MSHGC, (C2/D3/F1/4), Memories of Mr Sidney Cook.

<sup>8</sup> Swift, John, *An Illustrated History of Moseley School of Art: Art Education in Birmingham 1800-1975* (2004), courtesy of Roy Albutt.

Homework, or 'Prep', was mandatory for all pupils and in Stevenson's day included:

the learning by heart of four lines of verse on five nights a week, graduating from John Gilpin and Chevy Chase (which gave me a permanent love for the Border Ballads) through Lays of Ancient Rome to Gray and Milton ... Homework, and all work, was taken seriously, and those who didn't try were caned, publicly and painfully.

The June 1913 magazine emphasised the value of a classical education in the context of new educational ideas:

In such a commercial age as this, when it has become fashionable to decry the advantages of a classical education it is particularly gratifying to find that Wintersloe boys are following up with conspicuous success some of the ideals which the school may claim credit for first placing before them: at King Edward's at the present time we have one old boy in the 2nd, one in the 3rd, and two in the 4th, all on the classical side.

The magazines suggest a caring and encouraging atmosphere in which gaining a place at Technical College was given the same merit as passing the entrance exams for Oxford University. Many Wintersloe pupils sat the Preliminary, Junior, Senior and Higher Oxford Local Examinations and their achievements feature in the magazines. Pupils also sat the King Edward Foundation Scholarship Examination and the school's entrance examination as well as scholarships to status schools including Charterhouse and Wellington. One pupil went in 1920 as a cadet on HMS Conway, a School Ship stationed near Liverpool. The school's academic achievements received publicity: for example, K.G. Farmer's scholarship to King Edward's (KEHS) was listed in *The Birmingham Daily Post* of Tuesday 22 June, 1915, C.P. English's success in the Oxford Local Exams Junior Division was recognised in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, Wednesday 25 August 1915.

**Fig.7: *Macbeth*, The Wintersloe Magazine, 1922.**





A crucial aspect of Wintersloe School life was its theatrical productions and the magazines duly reported on every production in detail. The school put on a Shakespeare play at Christmas (Fig.7) and each summer, a Savoy-type opera, one of Gilbert and Sullivan's minor pieces, or a similar creation with words by Fisher himself and music by a visiting music master, 'a funny old thing with a walrus moustache called Johnson', according to Patrick Stevenson (Fig.8). Stevenson described the Shakespeare plays thus:

Our year ended, like our school song ended, with Shakespeare. In this we were not of course unique; yet there was something ritualistic, numinous, a total other than the sum of its component ... parts, that gave Wintersloe December play an unusual dimension'. Comparing performances with those that I have seen or been involved in at other schools (some of them technically much better) I am not sure of the reason for this. Perhaps the devotion to Shakespeare that permeated our school life, with its Warwickshire lore and songs by and about him, was in the true anthropological sense a cult.

**Fig.8: *The Pirates of Penzance*, The Wintersloe Magazine, 1921.**



Stevenson claimed that acting in these productions was voluntary, but 'once you put your name down you had to pull your weight or suffer the ignominy of being 'carted'. Mr Blaydon painted the scenery some of which Stevenson considered memorable:

a ruined abbey by moonlight for the 'Pirates'. An evening churchyard for 'Hamlet'. I suspect that Fisher himself inspired this latter scene, wistful and derelict, like the Flanders fields that had claimed too many of Wintersloe's earlier sons. That holocaust still haunts me, too – much more than World War II (through which I served); perhaps because Sorrento, the house next to our school, was a home for badly-wounded soldiers, whom we would see on fine days, tragic in their wheeled chairs.

The stage was in the back room. For a small place they did a terrific lot to get up a Shakespeare play or *Pirates of Penzance*. I learnt all the words of that, but I never took part in anything.<sup>9</sup>

The plays the school put on before WWI included *Romeo and Juliet* (1911), *Julius Caesar*, when the stage was larger, electric light installed and the old hanging drapery was replaced by a plain roll-up curtain (1912), *Hamlet* (Fig.18), *Trial by Jury* (1913), the first opera, *Merchant of Venice* and *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1914). Extracts from plays, such as the *Trial by Jury* in 1913 and 1914, were presented at the Wintersloe Summer Concerts along with instrumental solos, recitations and performances by the school band.

The Shakespearian plays were very important to the ethos of the school as the report on *Hamlet* in the April 1913 magazine highlights:

There is no doubt that at Wintersloe 'the Play's the thing'; of all the school undertakes outside the ordinary routine of school work the Play is easily first in the amount of enthusiasm it excites, in the hard work and pains bestowed upon it and in the pleasures it gives to those who are fortunate to see it. To a boy taking even a subordinate part in it, it must be an excellent means of discipline in itself, and those who are selected for the biggest parts it must impress with a life-long reverence for all that is noble in literature and human nature

Sport was always an important part of the curriculum, and included cricket, rugby football, cross country, athletics, gymnastics and swimming. Those taking part and the achievements of individuals were noted in every magazine along with details about matches. Cricket was played at Reddings on Tuesdays and Thursdays and when Reddings was secured for Saturday afternoons in 1911, this was considered 'a very great advantage for those boys who do not belong to the walking section and who are thus saved from the misery of having nothing better to do than loaf in the village'. 'In the playground there were cricket nets for daily practice in summer' and 'in winter there was a muddy game to which we were summoned by seniors with the cry 'musher-in'.<sup>10</sup> Football (Rugby Football) was played every Wednesday. The Four Miles Cross-Country, 'a gruelling cross-country test of endurance with an up-hill last lap run in the Forest of Arden' according to Stevenson, and Athletic Sports Days were annual events, with winners involved listed in the magazines. Prizes for sporting achievements were awarded at Annual Medal Nights, which were followed by theatrical performances, such as scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* in 1911 and *Hamlet* in 1913. On occasion in winter, such as in 1912, the school playground was flooded so that the boys could enjoy skating. Gymnastics was another sporting endeavour undertaken enthusiastically: in December 1913, all boys of the school who were physically capable (fifty-three boys) had joined the Gymnastic Class which was 'certain to exercise a highly beneficial influence on the boys in every way'. Displays, beginning in 1912, were put on at the new Dolobran Gymnasium at Friends Hall, Balsall Heath, organised by Professor Platinauer. Medals were awarded and the school band performed. The school had arrangements with the Tramways Department for a special car to take pupils to and from

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<sup>9</sup> The Memories of Sidney Cook.

<sup>10</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, p.28.

the Gym on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 10/- each day. Fifty attended in April 1913 making the cost 5d per week per pupil. Trips to the swimming baths, presumably at Balsall Heath, were noted as very popular in 1911.

Extra-curricular activities were significant elements of Wintersloe School. There were Annual Bonfires with fireworks provided by parents, and in 1911, the flames reached 30 feet in height and Mr Platnauer gave his first torch solo spectacle. In 1912 and 1913 'the ground...was, however, as usual on such occasions, invaded by numbers of persons whom some of us had never seen before and certainly do not wish to see again'. In 1912 'several hundredweight of matches which we were fortunate enough to have had given us contributed largely to the speed of ignition and a more than usually liberal effusion of tar accounted for the height and fierceness of the flames'. Annual Exhibitions of photographs by past and present boys took place and prizes were awarded, but the December 1911 magazine criticised the use of hand cameras which the writer considered gave 'unsatisfactory and inferior results' and were 'far more expensive (mainly on account of the waste)'. Chess was introduced in 1914 and a school medal planned. School parties regularly attended theatrical performances at Stratford-on Avon, and, in Birmingham, the Prince's Theatre and the Royal Theatre.<sup>11</sup> For example, in 1911 they saw *King Henry V* and in 1912 *The Merchant of Venice*, both performed by Mr Benson's Company.<sup>12</sup> There were also regular educational trips to places of interest, including in December 1911 to Tewksbury, in December 1912 to Ludlow and in November 1914 to Tong and Boscobel.

The Saturday afternoon Walking Section was inaugurated in 1896 and members tramped many miles across the countryside and hills accessible to Moseley by public transport. Members were a very influential group, as Patrick Stephenson recounts:

We had a school captain, but there were no prefects, the *corps d'elite* being selected on quite a different basis. Like C.S. Lewis' heaven, anyone could enter, but only suitable candidates in fact presented themselves. It was called the Walking Section. In the walking season – which depended, not (heaven forbid!) on weather, but on hours of daylight – the members stopped lessons at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday, and made their way southward by train or Midland Red Bus for their fifteen-mile trek along bridle-paths and by-ways. It was on these afternoons that one really got to know Fisher. Not that we were conscious of this at the time. The feeling was simply, as we rested on some summit that looked towards Evesham or the Severn, that we would rather be here doing this than anywhere else. This was clearly what Fisher felt, with a depth of conviction that communicated itself to us.

However, the 1913 Magazine says the Walking Section was no longer so popular:

... it is evidently 'caviare to the general'. There are now exactly half as many boys in the section as there were last summer, which makes one wonder what 80 per cent of Wintersloe boys do on Saturday afternoons. It is, we regret to say, an established

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<sup>11</sup> The Prince of Wales Theatre, Broad Street, Birmingham, opened in September 1856 as the Royal Music Hall. The Theatre Royal was erected in New Street in 1774, rebuilt in 1902 and demolished in 1954.

<sup>12</sup> Sir Francis Robert Benson (Frank Benson or F.R. Benson) (1858-1939) was an English actor-manager who founded his own company in 1883 and produced all but three of Shakespeare's plays.



fact that 75 per cent simply go to swell the ranks of the loafers and lookers on; they frequent football matches and picture houses; they feebly waste their afternoon in biking up and down the village, or having friends to tea. An enquiry at school one morning elicited the information that eight boys went on the walking section, one went a bicycle ride, one played football and 45 did nothing!

**Fig.9: The walking tour of the eight Shakespeare villages, 1913.<sup>13</sup>**



In 1913, the Section walked through the eight famous Shakespeare villages (Fig.9).

*Piping Peabworth, Dancing Marston,  
Haunted Hillboro, Hungry Grafton,  
Dodging Exhall, Papist Wixford,  
Beggarly Broom and Drunken Bidford.*

Pupils were encouraged to contribute articles to the magazines. These covered a wide variety of subjects, such as 'The Tower of London' (1911), 'The Ascent of Gamedd Gock & Craig Coch from Nantlle' (1912) and 'Hirudo Medicinalis – The Leech' (1913).

The 1911 edition of the Wintersloe Magazine, the earliest one in our possession, included a 'Coronation Souvenir', designed and drawn by Mr Balden, the visiting art teacher (Fig.10). The medallion features King George V and Queen Mary. George V succeeded to the throne in 1910. He had married Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, known as May, in 1893. Patriotism came to the fore during World War I. In November 1914, a Union Jack was bought for the school flagpole to be raised firstly ceremoniously and thereafter 'on the occasion of all

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<sup>13</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

successes attending British Arms'. The 1914 November magazine opened with a patriotic Latin poem (Fig.11), and included a patriotic song (Fig.12) and a list of old boys serving in the armed forces (Fig.13).

Fig 10: Coronation Souvenir, 1911.



Fig.11: Frontespiece, November 1914.



Fig.12: Now or Never, by S .H. Fisher and T. Johnson, The Wintersloe Magazine, November 1914.

**NOW OR NEVER!**

S.H.F. T.J.

1. Sons of Britain! now or never Brace your souls to stern an-  
2. Scorn your foe menaced by de- traction Cease from sport & cease from  
3. Kindled by a fierce emotion India proves her free de-  
4. Smite the tyrant while he rages In the wicked strife he

- deavour Rally to the flag that ev- er Shall for  
faction Enter nobly in- to action Like your  
- volution Hands to you across the o- cean Afri-  
wages Raise the arm thro' all the ages Famed for

free- dom wave! Hear ye not the bugle  
sires of old, Till their coward fleet is  
- eans ex- tend; Come Australia's bravest  
chival- ry! By no lust of war in-

calling? Hail ye not your comrades falling? While the foe in  
scattered Till from France their hosts are battered Till their cursed  
ry- ing With Canadian zeal un- dy- ing Britain's flag with  
- cited Show the world a front united Sworn to fight till

strength appalling Tramples on the brave...  
pride is shattered You the sword shall hold...  
honour flying Proudly to de- fend...  
wrongs are righted leaving nations free...

Forward then for freedom Overland and sea - -

Ours the might that springs from right Ours the victory.



Fig 13: Old Wintersloe Boys serving in the Army, The Wintersloe Magazine, November 1914.

L. W. Auster, Middlesex Regiment.	G. Frazier, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.
W. Auster, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.	H. Keen, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.
V.L.W. Brown, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.	L. K. V. Job, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.
P. W. Brown, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.	R. Lucking, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.
J. S. Baker, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.	A. Macniven, Cameron Highlanders.
C. Bagley, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.	D. Macniven, Royal Warwicks.
L. Bryan, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.	R. Perkins, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.
S. Bryan, 3rd City of Birmingham Batt.	W. Robinson, South Midland Brigade Royal
S. B. Edwards, South Manchester Regiment.	Field Artillery.
F. B. Goodison, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.	R. Rusby, 4th Gloucestershire Regiment.
H. Haddelsey, Yorkshire Light Infantry.	S. Suckling, 1st Royal Berkshire Regiment.
W. Hedges, 1st N. Midland Field Co.	L. Sayer, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.
S. Hirst, 19th Infantry Brigade R.E.	J. B. Ward, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.
Expeditionary Force,	L. Wareham, 6th Royal Warwicks.
W. R. Hassall, 1st City of Birmingham Batt.	C. Wareham, 6th Royal Warwicks.

The November 1914 magazine said of the Wintersloe Old Boys who had enlisted (Fig.12):

We note with utmost pride and satisfaction that many of the Wintersloe Old Boys have responded to the Nation's Call, by joining the colours'. They have indeed proved themselves true to the watchword of their old school and we cordially offer them our heartiest congratulations, and wish them very fervently the best of good luck.

Some Old Boys listed here who died during WWI are not on Moseley Memorials.<sup>14</sup> **Captain Lesley Sayer**, the son of Henry James Sayer, a Lord Mayor of Birmingham, lived in Belle Walk, Moseley, and attended Wintersloe School from 1904 to 1908. He enlisted on the outbreak of war in the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion RWR (The Birmingham Pals) and won two Military Crosses and a Military Bar. He was wounded in 1916, returned to France in 1917 and died in 1918 aged twenty-five years. He was buried at the Shrine Cemetery, Bucquoy. **Sidney Hirst** was born in 1895 and lived at 10 Forest Road, Moseley. He was at Wintersloe School from 1906 to 1910. He joined up aged nineteen a few days after war was declared as a despatch rider. In 1917 he was commissioned into the Royal Flying Corps and was shot down and accepted as dead in 1918. **Joseph Shirley Baker**, a senior boy who was at Wintersloe School between 1908 and 1914, enrolled in 1914 as a private in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Birmingham Pals (16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment) and went straight from the school 'to take his place in the ranks of his country's defenders'.<sup>15</sup> He was the son of Mr E. S. Baker of 134, All Saints Road, King's Heath. He reached France with his Battalion on November 21st 1915 and was killed on July 27th 1916 during the Somme Campaign in an attack in the Delville Wood/ Langleval area on that day where they suffered heavy losses in an unsuccessful attack. His body was never found. His name however does appear on the Thiepval Memorial.

<sup>14</sup> Information courtesy of Jim Hone. See our website for further information on Leslie Sayer and Sidney Hirst and others from Moseley who do not appear on local WWI Memorials ([moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history](http://moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history)).

<sup>15</sup> WWI information courtesy of Jim Hone.

Some Old Boys listed in Figure 14 are on Moseley WWI Memorials.<sup>16</sup> **Captain William Herbert Hedges** is on the WWI Memorial at St Mary's Church. The family lived at Heytor, 117 Anderton Park Road and William attended Wintersloe School between 1905 and 1907. He served from 1914, was wounded in 1915, proceeded to Egypt and then France in 1916, and was severely wounded and died in 1916, aged twenty-three. He received the Military Cross and was buried at Warlincourt Halt Cemetery. **2nd Lt Alastair MacNiven** of the 7th (Service) Battalion of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders is also on the St Mary's Church WWI Memorial and that at St Columba's United Reform Church. He served from 1914, was twice wounded and died on 1 May from wounds received in late April, 1917, aged twenty-seven. He was buried at Duisans British Cemetery. He attended Wintersloe School between 1899 and 1905 and was the son of William and Annie MacNiven of 19 Oakland Road, Moseley, in 1911, and later Nevis Lodge, 19 Anderton Park Road. **Frank Bowler Goodison** was a Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion, South Staffs Regiment attached to the 137 Infantry Brigade, 46th Division. He died on 26 May, 1917, aged twenty-three, whilst in German hands at Mainz Fortress Hospital and was buried in Niederzwehren Cemetery, Kassel, Germany. He served in France and Egypt, was injured in 1916, and returned when recovered to France in 1917 as a Flying Officer Observer. He was shot down by German aircraft led by Manfred von Richtofen, 'the Red Baron', was injured and taken prisoner, dying of his wounds seven weeks later. He is listed on the WWI Memorials at St Mary's Church and St Agnes Church. He lived at Abersock, Sandford Road, and then, in 1915, at Wensleydale, 21 St Agnes Road. He was the son of Frank and Eliza Goodison. He attended Wintersloe School from 1903 to 1910 and went on to be a dental student.

This 1914 edition of the magazine shows that school life went on for most of the year as normal with the exception of the Annual Bonfire which was cancelled:

Such a proceeding [a bonfire] would, we think, be highly inappropriate in view of the stern realities of the war now raging: while our whole nation is passing through the greatest crisis in its history. Nobody now is in the frame of mind for frivolity of any kind, nor should we be justified in incurring expense, or bestowing time and labour on such a useless and wholly unnecessary object.

The March 1915 magazine listed the fifty-two Old Boys serving and identified the six already in France (Fig.14) and ended with a poem, 'The Battle of Ypres' (Fig.15). The magazine recorded the loss of two Old Boys, **J.S. Baker** and **H. Verralls**:

They strove hard to uphold our highest traditions and to foster in the school that keenness and loyalty which we regard as the mainspring of our success and utility as a school. Always popular in school they have by joining the colours and enlisting in Lord Kitchener's army, won for themselves the undying admiration of their old school fellows. Whatever results the war may have for us, it has already

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<sup>16</sup> Courtesy of Edwina Rees who has researched Moseley WWI Memorials. See our website for further information these men and others ([moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history](http://moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history)). Additional information courtesy of Jim Hone.



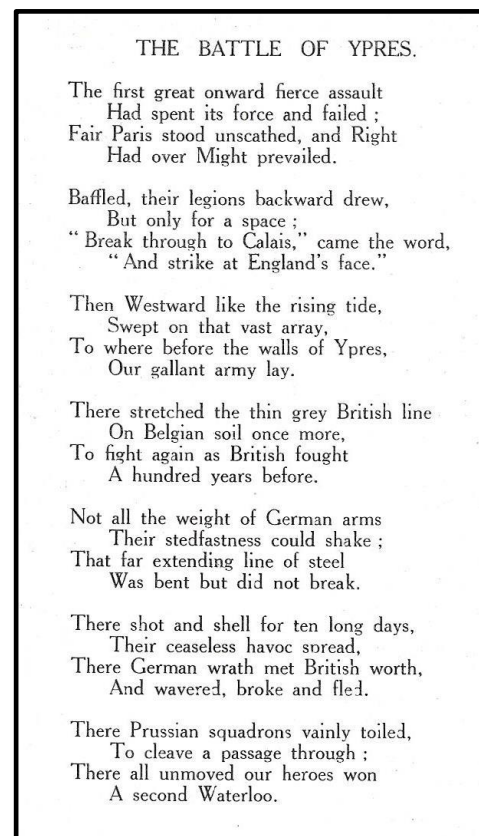
conclusively proved that the Wintersloe boys are made of the right stuff and can be relied on to do their duty to the Empire. We shall never cease to follow with pride the careers of our old boys, as one by one they take part in the triumphs and perils of this supreme struggle.

**H. Verralls** was at Wintersloe by 1911. He served in the armed services from 1914. The 1919 magazine says that Mr H. Verralls, a former pupil who joined the colours in 1914, was drafted to India and Burmah and returned to England in 1919, was a teacher at the school, but was absent through illness.

**Fig.14: Frontespiece, March 1915.**



**Fig.15: 'The Battle of Ypres'**



An article, 'England's Readiness in Time of War' displayed attitudes to war, character and race current at the time:

Fortunately for us, the people in power and on whom depended the safety of England, did not listen to the preaching of the little army and Navyites, or by now we should be practically wiped out as a great power. Our readiness and immediate despatch in sending out the Expeditionary Force, so splendidly equipped and so grandly transported, undoubtedly saved France, while our navy by guarding the trade routes, has already saved England from starvation, and will, we believe, break Germany's navy for ever from threatening our shores. Terrible as the present war is, there is no doubt that it will be a fine thing, not only for England, but for the whole world, as it will prove that we are not a degenerate race, and our power is not to be

despised, as Germany evidently thought it was. It will also bring out the qualities in our men which would never have had the chance to develop in times of peace and luxury. Everyone knows that the finest can only be achieved through suffering, adversity, and strenuous effort, and so the splendid qualities which might otherwise lie dormant forever in the English race, will have a chance to come to the front, and we may be sure that as many men will be made as marred in the present war. We have proved that we are, as a nation, eminently fitted to rule our fallen foes properly and with justice, by the offers of help from India and Africa, and all the savage tribes who come under our dominion. The Boers, who as the last conquered, might at least have been expected to stand aside during our present bitter struggle were amongst the most eager to send help to crush the tyrant's power of might over right, which is the only god that German militarism knows, and which they will undoubtedly enforce if they ever rule Europe. Therefore it behoves us to stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood, and fight to a finish.

The March 1915 magazine reveals that 'owing directly to the War', the Reddings was no longer available and so instead of football the boys were taken on 'Route marches' on Wednesday afternoons until temporary accommodation for football and cricket was found on Wake Green Road. The Athletic Sports was abandoned, but much of school life, continued. An Opera, 'entirely new and original', *The Cobbler's Dilemma*, and Shakespeare's *King Richard III* were produced. Stewards were absent, though, because most of the Old Boys who usually officiated were 'away on military duties'. The Annual Chess Tournament also took place and travel into Wales was still possible: an article describes 'A Ride into Wales', a cycle trip starting by rail to Wolverhampton. Shrewsbury streets were 'thronged with soldiers', scouts were observed on the way to Oswestry guarding telegraph wires.

The April 1916 magazine opened with the list of seventy 'Old Boys' in uniform (Fig.16).

**Fig.16: Frontespiece, 1916.**



**Fig.17: Loos Memorial and the Inscription to M. Lucking.<sup>1</sup>**



Some of these Old Boys died in action: **Maxwell Lucking** was a private in the 2/6th Royal Warwickshire regiment. He died in 1916 aged twenty and was commemorated on the Loos Memorial, France (Fig.17) and on St Agnes' WWI Memorial.<sup>17</sup> He was the son of James and Minnie Amelia Lucking of 50 Oxford Road and attended Wintersloe School from 1906 until 1913. When Maxwell Lucking left the school the magazine noted that his:

seven years among us were marked by a quiet, but honest enthusiasm in every school event. He was a type of boy much needed in a school like ours – though conscious of not being able to win the first place in scholarship or sport. He was always a trier and did what he did to the best of his power and for the sake of doing it; never a mere looker on, which so many are content to be, but more uniformly strenuous than any other boy of his time in the various departments of school life. His influence though never meteoric was always quietly and steadily working for good.

**Fig 18: 'He is gone, he is gone', *Hamlet*, Act IV., Scene 5, 1912.**<sup>18</sup>



**E. Mitton** on the 1916 list lived at Abbotsford, 69 Wake Green Road, Moseley. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers who died in 1917 and was buried in Duhallow Advanced Dressing Station (A.D.S.) Cemetery, Ypres.<sup>19</sup> He is commemorated on Moseley WWI Memorials at St Mary's Church, St Agnes Church and the Baptist Church in Oxford Road (now the Calvary Church of God in Christ) where the family worshipped. He attended Wintersloe between 1905 and 1911 and was Top Boy. His poetry was published by the family as a memorial to him.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Courtesy of Jim Andrew.

<sup>18</sup> **J.S.Baker** took the part of Polonius. **M. Lucking** played Calpurnia. **G. H. Goodison** played Hamlet.

<sup>19</sup> Courtesy Jim Andrew. See also the extensive work on E. Mitton by Edwina Rees on WWI men on Moseley memorials on our website ([moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history](http://moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history)).

<sup>20</sup> Courtesy of Jim and Margaret Andrew. 'Ewart was probably used as his father was named Thomas. A copy of the book of Ewart's poems was presented to the Moseley Society History Group for our collection.

The magazine noted that:

... the large number of our old boys who have answered the country's call and the frequent visits of many of them to Wintersloe, some straight from the front, bring us very forcibly to a real appreciation of the crisis through which we are passing. We are constantly receiving letters, field postcards, and photographs from our old boys which stir the hearts and fire the patriotism of those who are now united by the same mystic token, - VEF.

The magazine listed news from 'Old boys' at war: **'QUIDQUID AGUIT HOMINES'**.

**J.S. Baker:** doing four days in trench and four days' rest alternately. A plentiful supply of 'sausages' and few casualties.

**P.W. Brown:** says he purchased Shakespeare's tragedies 'somewhere in France', which brings back memories of the happiest day of his life –those spent at Wintersloe – and after the trench mud acts as a restorative to a fuddled brain.

**W. Hedges:** badly wounded at Ypres; returned England; recovered; promoted to captain; went back to France; then Egypt, now back in France. (See above).

**F.B. Goodison:** went to France then Egypt where he 'has been indulging in one or two strafes with the Arabs'. Thinks war more like a Cook's Tour every day and sends word to Wintersloe Boys 'that their chance will come in 1926 when war really begins'. (See above).

**L. Bryan:** spent his twenty-fourth birthday contemplating ruins of a beautiful old French town, whose cathedral towered roofless, above the scene of desolation.

**S. Suckling:** saw some of the thickest of the early fighting, mainly in Soissons district. He was invalided home.

**H. Keen:** He was transferred to Flying Corps from City Battalion and was leaving for France.

**A. White:** R.A.M.C. He refuses 'leave' preferring to stay at his post till the war over.

**H. Haddesley:** promoted to Corporal then Second Lieutenant. He is at the front, 'having the time of his life'.

**W. Hassell:** fought in the Battle of Loos; has recovered from dysentery and now again in the firing line.

**A. Lancaster:** home for a few days leave at Christmas; called at Wintersloe for the second performance of 'Richard III'.

**S. Hirst** (Horsey): has been in the thick of it from the start, still going strong. (See above).

**W. Lamble:** wrote home for a copy of the School Song to regale the crew of 'H.M.S. Marlborough'.

**G.E. Gyde:** fought all the way through the retreat from Mons and the battle of the Marne. Then he went on to Aisne, was wounded in head, but is recovering.

**B. Paterson:** was in on the landing at Sulva Bay 4 August, 1915. Three months later was sent to hospital at Cairo with dysentery, then to Hollymoor and Blackwell.

The 1916 issue gave an update on the progress of the war:



The war's ravages have been spreading far and wide; new combatants on both sides have entered the fray; the mighty military machine of the enemy, which at first well-nigh carried all before it, has been brought on all sides to a standstill, and the five great protagonists stand locked as it were in each other's iron grip; the British fleet, assisted by their allies, has been holding unchallenged the command of all the seas and vast British armies have sprung into existence and are fighting in three continents; the incessant roar of thousands of factories resounds to the forging of the munitions of war – in a word, our nation has been stripping in grim earnest for the combat *a outrance*.

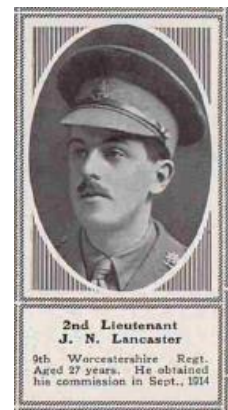
'An article, 'A Field Hospital Somewhere in France, March 1916' by 'An Old Wintersloviaan', a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps, gives a poignant evocative picture of a hectic day starting at 6.30 a.m. on a ward in 'a kind of loft belonging to what was once a large private house' and finishing around 9.00 p.m. He mentions the rats, the sad state of his billet, a barn nearby' almost under the shadow of the Church' in a French village 'of the usual type'. They were shocked when they first heard the church chimes 'thinking it was the dreaded gas-alarm'.

A Roll of Honour in the 1916 magazine recorded the deaths of two Old Boys.

**T. Lancaster:** 'went out in the early days of the war; was wounded but recovered; fought in the Battle for Hill 60; was reported missing; no tidings of him have been received since May 1915'. He was at Wintersloe School from 1904 to 1906.

**T. Turner:** 'enlisted in the Indian Army on the outbreak of war; went into training at Quetta; sent to Mesopotamia in December 1915; killed in action 20 March 1916. He was at Wintersloe from 1902 to 1908'.

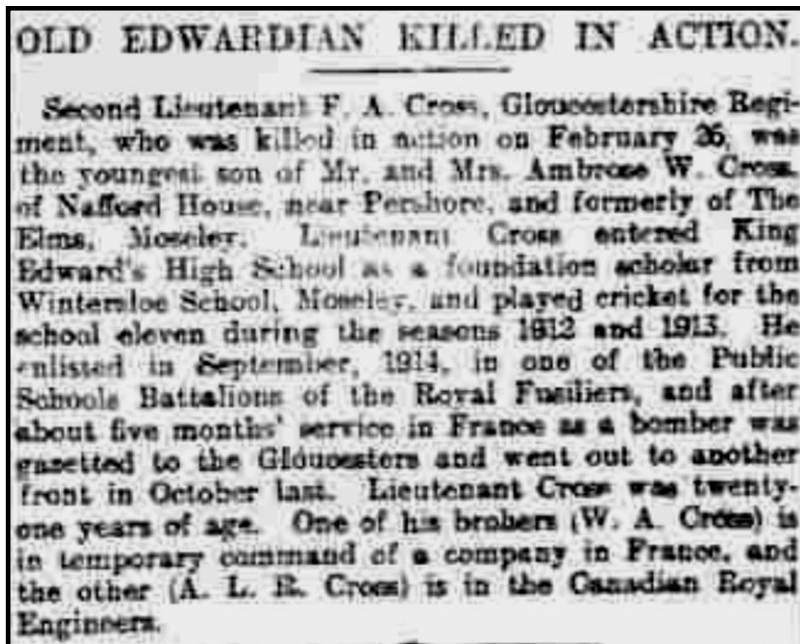
*The Birmingham Mail 17 August 1915* reported that **Second-Lieutenant James Norman Lancaster** of the 9<sup>th</sup> Service Battalion (the 9<sup>th</sup> Worcestershire Regiment) was killed in the Gallipoli Peninsula, aged twenty-eight on August 10<sup>th</sup> 1915.<sup>21</sup> His name is on the Helles Memorial as he has no known grave. He served in WWI from 1914. He was the son of William and the late Annie Lancaster of Pine Crest, Barnt Green, near Birmingham. He was born in June 1888 in Handsworth. His father was listed as an optician and he, James was employed elsewhere as a camera manufacturer's manager. When he died, his effects totalled £1393.13.6.



*The Birmingham Daily Post* of 8 March 1917 reported the death of **Second-Lieutenant F.A. Cross** in action (Fig.19). He was at Wintersloe School from 1905 to 1909.

<sup>21</sup> *The Sphere 04 September 1915*. Courtesy of Edwina Rees. WWI and family information courtesy of Jim Hone.

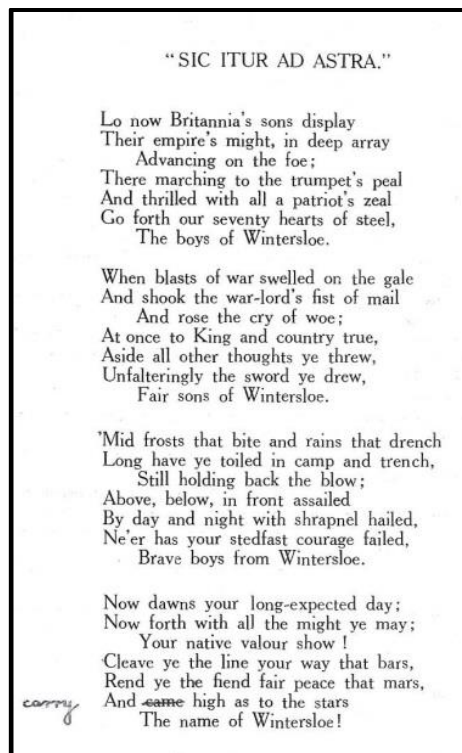
Fig.19: Second-Lieutenant F.A. Cross in action.<sup>22</sup>



School News in 1916 included details of the Gymnastic Display and scholastic successes, but noted that 'we are all eagerly looking forward to the day when the allied armies shall enter the enemy's capital and the school tricolour be hoisted at the Reddings'.

This edition included a patriotic poem, *SIC ITUR AD ASTRA* (Fig.20)

Fig.20: *SIC ITUR AD ASTRA*, The Wintersloe Magazine, April 1916.



<sup>22</sup> The Birmingham Daily Post of 8 March 1917. Courtesy of Edwina Rees.

1916 was the twentieth anniversary of the Wintersloe Play:

To enable us next Christmas to do fitting justice to the time, all that is needed is the decisive defeat of our enemies on all sides and the consequent end to the war. Given this we promise our friends that no effort will be spared before the end of 1916 to achieve something worthy of an occasion so great and so auspicious.

The play chosen, the school's twentieth, was reported on in the July 1917 magazine:

After two-and-a-half years of War, with its glories and its horrors, with its triumphs and its failures, its hopes and its disappointments something placid was needed for the Play of 1916. We wanted repose for our worried thoughts; something sweet, cheerful and refreshing. And we got it. In all Shakespeare no play could have been better chosen than 'As You Like it'.

A party of sixty people visited the Shakespeare Tercentenary during Festival Week at Stratford to see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Memorial Theatre by Sir F. Benson's Company. They were driven there by parents. The Chess tournament took place as usual, but the Walking Section dwindled to seven in April 1916:

We suppose the walking section is unpopular because the members walk. No doubt a cycling or motoring section would be more popular; but after all we fear the town has for most of us more attractions than the country; the pavement more than the green sward; the screech of the motor horn more than the song of the missel thrush; the fug of the picture house more than the wind of the mountain. What a craze it is, this insane desire to be always huddling together in crowds!

The July 1917 edition of Wintersloe Magazine opened with a list of Old Boys serving in the armed services (Fig.21) and closed with a Roll of Honour (Fig.22).

Fig.21: Frontespiece, 1917.



Fig.22: Roll of Honour, July 1917.

Roll of Honour.				
H. SANBY	...	...	...	1896—1898.
A. MACNIVEN	...	...	...	1899—1905.
T. TURNER	...	...	...	1902—1908.
F. B. GOODISON	...	...	...	1903—1910.
T. LANCASTER	...	...	...	1904—1906.
W. HEDGES	...	...	...	1905—1907.
F. CROSS	...	...	...	1905—1909.
R. BURT	...	...	...	1906—1908.
M. LUCKING	...	...	...	1906—1913.
J. S. BAKER	...	...	...	1908—1914.
"Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet aeo."				

**Private George Harold Goodison** of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment and formerly of the Worcestershire Regiment, was killed in action on October 1st 1918 aged 18. He served from 1918, in France and Belgium and was buried at Hooze Crater Cemetery, near Ypres, Flanders, along with 2344 other British soldiers. He is named on two Moseley WWI Memorials, St Mary's Church and St Agnes Church.<sup>23</sup> He was the younger brother of Frank B Goodison and lived at Abersoch, Sandford Road, Moseley. Their Father, Frank (Senior) was listed as the proprietor of a gold-leaf manufacturing business. George was at Wintersloe School from 1908 to 1913.

The April 1913 magazine wrote when G. H. Goodison left the school that he:

leaves a gap in the school which all will confess we shall be unable to fill for some considerable time. Among his many records he has added this – of being the first Wintersloe boy who has ever commenced his career at King Edward's in a class as high as the Classical Fourth. This, at the age of 13 ½, sufficiently attests to his merits; but he combines with these a high standard of Athletic prowess. He held our Junior Challenge Cup for three years; he twice won the Cross-Country Cup; he was the best all-round cricketer and won the Swimming Competition for 1912. He and **Lucking** were very prominent members of the Walking Section, and last summer in a six days' tour of North Wales, accompanied by two more members of the Section, they ascended eleven mountains, averaging over 2,000 feet, in the most atrocious weather. Finally came his impersonation of Hamlet at the school play last Christmas, in which he put before us a most intellectual and convincing reproduction of Shakespeare's great masterpiece [Fig.18].

The 1917 issue included an article, 'My Experiences in the Air raid', by C.H.F. (Cedric Fisher). He had gone down to London to Charterhouse to take their exam. Whilst doing their Latin prose paper they heard 'two or three low thuds, sounding more like distant thunder than anything else' then 'a tremendous crash resembling very loud thunder, but shorter and sharper' followed by 'another terrific bang'. The boys 'eager to get a glimpse of what is passing, make a wild rush for the balcony which adjoins the 'Great Chamber', and from which a tolerable view of house tops can be obtained'. Then they all went down to 'the vaulted depths' where 'in the bowels of the earth nothing can be heard of the hostile raiders'.

The 1917 magazine notes that, though some news would be stale, the magazine's chief purpose 'is to place on record the *'res gestae'* of the school'. It mourns the loss of the Annual Bonfire, the Athletic Sports, the School Excursion, in 1916 the Gymnastic Display and in 1917 'our Cricket'. Cricket was given up to use the 'two half-days 'in digging'. Mr Heath of Leasowes, 170 Wake Green Road, gave the school 1,000 square yards of his land. Thirty-seven boys got up turf and double dug, preparing the ground for potatoes. Another plot of 1,000 square yards in Grove Avenue was secured for them by the Council, Twenty-seven boys were allotted patches of fifty yards or less at Mr Heath's, and the others

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<sup>23</sup> See the extensive work done by Edwina Rees on G.H Goodison on our website ([moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history](http://moseleysociety.org.uk/local-history)). Additional information courtesy of Jim Hone.



prepared the Grove Avenue land. The boys provided their own seed and were entitled to their own crops. The costs were 2/- each for senior boys and 1/- for juniors, excluding seeds. There was a prize for the boy who produced the best 10lb sample of potatoes grown by himself on his own allotment. The activity not only acted as an insurance against possible food shortages, it helped people, such as Wintersloe's pupils, feel they were contributing to the war effort. Patrick Stevenson wrote:

Today when I see the word 'nobility' the picture that flashes through my mind is not of coronets crowding into the abbey; it is of the headmaster of Wintersloe on his way back from the school allotments, pushing his barrow along Wake Green Road and looking, not as if he owned that fashionable thoroughfare, but as if he'd had the offer of it, and turned it down.

The activities of the Walking Section were limited in 1916 and ceased in 1917, because of the abolition of half-day tickets, the rise in railway fares and lack of time as the allotments took up much of Saturday afternoons. The school did manage a trip to Stratford, though, to celebrate the Shakespeare Tercentenary during the Festival Week to see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Sir F. Benson's Company. The Play and the Opera – *Pirates of Penzance* and *As you Like it* - were not affected. An opera version of *Comedy of Errors* was prepared in the summer term, but:

We notice with regret a great falling off in the number of volunteers for parts, only 33 per cent of boys of the school put down their names ... a condition of things without parallel in our history. We must assume that boys nowadays, unlike their predecessors of the Old Brigade, regard attendance at rehearsals as too much fag. If the time for rehearsals were taken from school hours, no doubt we should have plenty of volunteers; as it is, and always has been, it means a boy must make a sacrifice for the sake of the school, which in the past we have always found a great majority were ready to do. If it were not for this spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice how could we have an opera or a play at all? And if, and when this spirit decays, then our school becomes the same dull, feeble, humdrum institution as hundreds of others are. The idea that such extra work interferes with a boy's health or his chances in examinations has been over and over again proved to be mistaken. Our experience shows that those are most regular in their attendance at school and do best in exams, who take part in all and everything connected with the school just as it comes along.

No Wintersloe Magazine was issued in 1918. *The Birmingham Gazette* of Monday 8 April 1918, recorded that **A.E.W. Cook**, Second-Lieut., aged nineteen, had been wounded on the Western Front and that he had been educated at Wintersloe School, Moseley, where he had carried off many honours on the sports field.

The next magazine was published in June 1919. Its frontespiece depicted 'Peace' (Fig.23) and included a 'Roll of Honour' (Fig.24) and a song by S.H.F and 'T' Johnson celebrating 'Victory' (Fig.25). The June 1919 magazine promised 'all its pre-war vitality', 'a restoration of an interesting and important branch of our institutions' and 'to those who have since joined us, it will, we hope, provide a new centre round which their interests and affections

may gather'. The first Wintersloe School magazine originated in 1895 (Fig.26) and showed that the colours and the motto *Virtutem Extendere Factis* had already been chosen. The 1919 magazine noted the falling off of interest in the allotments, an activity that became voluntary after the war ended. The ground at Leasowes was given up. The school was looking forward, though, rehearsing *Ulysses* in which more boys wanted to be involved, forty-six per cent compared to thirty-two per cent two years previously. However, there were barely enough for the cast and the smaller boys were not coming forward. The magazine speculated that:

Perhaps in many cases parents do not know that we are working up for an opera and boys who simply wish to slack, take care to say nothing about it at home. Otherwise, surely, parents would insist on their boys volunteering. By not doing so they lose a very important part of their school training: the stage being used at Wintersloe as an instrument for that purpose as we have said before in the pages of this Magazine. The idea that boys want 'time to themselves' every day is, according to our experience, fallacious: if they are given such time, nine out of ten will only slack in it and the few who have healthy, interesting and appropriate out-of-school hobbies, can pursue them to their hearts' content during the fourteen weeks per annum of holidays. But all boys need proper recreation, it may be said. Quite so, but what is recreation? Or must there be ragging and disorder if there is to be recreation? Is gardening recreation or going to the Baths and Gymnasium? If so then everybody at Wintersloe gets on average 2 ½ hours a day recreation. Will it be urged that he needs 'time to himself' even in addition to this, when, as we have just said he gets 14 weeks' complete holiday from everything in the year. However that may be, it is certain that it is in the unity of its corporate life that the boarding school beats the day school; boys who have to become citizens of their city, defenders of their country and sharers in a common empire can only do so by first learning the lessons and catching the spirit of comradeship at school; and it is in creating and fostering this spirit that we implore the co-operation of all parents.

Boys are quite frequently taken away from Wintersloe because of the very fact that we place this ideal before them and insist on their striving to attain it. School still seems to be regarded in some quarters as an uncomfortable place where boys have to be sent to absorb so much arithmetic, or so much history, or so much Latin. 'What I want is facts, boys, facts, facts' said Mr Gradgrind. Directly you punish a boy for violating your rules which you have, after long experience, framed for the better discipline of the whole school, you are called harsh and unjust; the boy is told at home that he is receiving unfair treatment, and encouraged to rebel in this way against your authority, he isolates himself from his school fellows, his position becomes impossible and he leaves. You are, in other words, not allowed to teach that boy the meaning of discipline or of sacrificing his own selfish inclinations for the honour and welfare of the school to which he belongs. Do not the very conditions of the age we live in tell us that we know (or think we know) too many 'facts' but possess too little character. Are not selfishness and consequently, lawlessness the greatest dangers we have to face? What is becoming of the old

virtues of reverence, truthfulness and obedience? And why should the fifth commandment apply at home but not at school?

Fig.23: Frontespiece, June 1919.

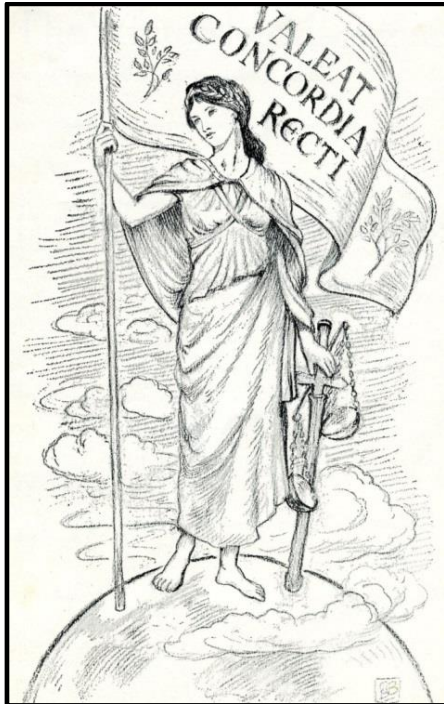


Fig.24: Roll of Honour, June 1919.

# Roll of Honour.—

C. S. BEACHCROFT	...	1895—1898
H. SANBY	...	1896—1898
A. T. COND	...	1896—1900
A. MACNIVEN	...	1899—1905
T. LANCASTER	...	1904—1906
W. HEDGES	...	1905—1907
T. TURNER	...	1902—1908
L. SAYER	...	1904—1908
R. BURT	...	1906—1908
F. CROSS	...	1905—1909
J. LANCASTER	...	1907—1909
F. B. GOODISON	...	1903—1910
S. HIRST	...	1906—1910
E. MILTON	...	1905—1911
P. JOYCE	...	1909—1911
M. LUCKING	...	1906—1913
G. GOODISON	...	1908—1913
J. S. BAKER	...	1908—1914

"Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet aevo."

Fig.25: Victory Song, June 1919.

## VICTORY.

S. H. F. T. Johnson

*poco lento*

Dash to the war cloud o'er us

Fierce and arrogant the foe Death or slavery would be sure us Blood in streams began to flow.

Fall Roumanian Serb & Belgian Russia faithless quits the strife

**Chorus**

*cresc.* Yet waiting, true, unflinching France and England fight for life *allegro* For with all our might we

*poco lento*

stand for right, For home and freedom still we join the fight Now tyrants crushed & nations rising free Proclaim our victory.

**Verse 4**

*Sostenuto* God be praised the strife is ended Lo for peace the sun hath shed

*poco lento*

Honour saved and home defended, Crime defeated, Pride subdued, Conquered nations legions in freedom

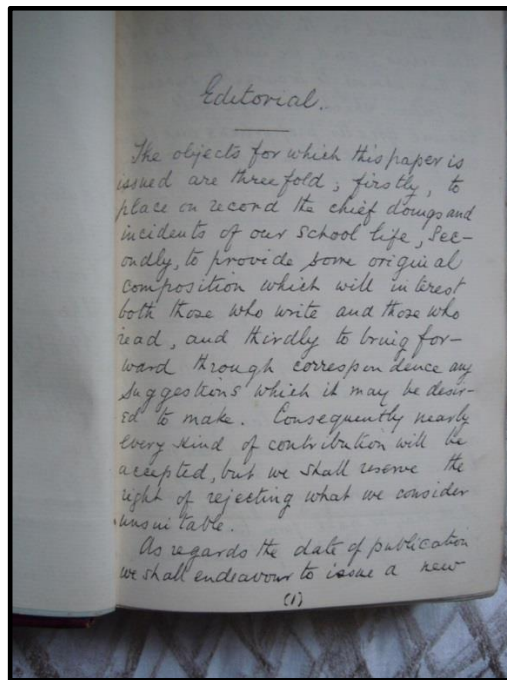
*cresc.* Now down that path shall cease Our reverend shall be, justice endures shall be, Welcome now glorious peace

**Chorus D.C.**

Still his guns incessant thunder'd  
Blasting all our front ablaze;  
Still his rush we met unsunder'd  
Holding fast for a thousand days.  
Vain the boast he would invade us;  
Swept we him from every sea,  
Then blockaded him, fought and raided him  
Clipping the wings of his eagle free.

Massing all his strength to break us  
—Fatal throw in a gambler's game—  
Thrice he strove in hate to shake us,  
Pouring poison, vomiting flame!  
Breathless, spent with his own mad fury,  
Then we turned and struck him again,  
Then we shattered him broke and battered him  
Back from the lands he had ravaged in vain.

Fig.26: The First page of the First Wintersloe Magazine, 1895.<sup>24</sup>



After World War I more comments like this appeared showing concern about changing attitudes of pupils and parents. The information articles in the 1919 edition included 'The Evolution of the Aeroplane' and 'The Making of a Gun' also evoked WWI, whilst 'The Home of Shakespeare' spoke to Wintersloe's long tradition of the bard's plays.

The School News in the 1920 edition bemoans the standard of cricket: 'the boys are only just beginning to make up the ground lost during the war'. They had no proper pitch between 1915 and 1918 and 'the present cost of materials makes the game, as it ought to be played almost impossibility' with prices increasing 200-300 per cent'. 'This slackness' is given as the major reason why Gym was given up and replaced by fifteen minutes of physical exercises at school in the open air every day during recess

Every Gym day brought its tale of excuses by which always a considerable number of boys had to stay behind and as they were drawn from different classes, it was next to impossible to find them appropriate work.

Theatricals continued as an important part in the Wintersloe curriculum. The previous summer production of *Ulysses* was very successful, but prompted a criticism of boys going on holiday before the end of term:

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<sup>24</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family. This was written by the Librarian, a Mr Clark. On the second page he says, 'The Wintersloe library was commenced in April last by Mr Fisher kindly giving a number of very interesting books, and thanks to other contributors also, it now contains about 70 volumes'.

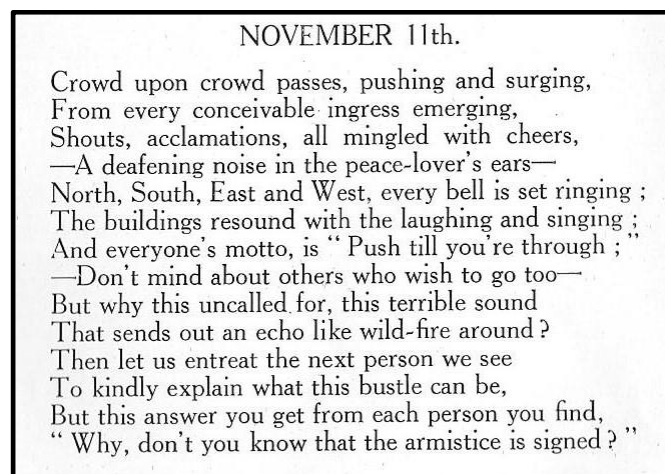


It is a great pity that every year there are always some boys who have to go away for their Summer holidays before the end of term, and are thus prevented from taking part in the operas ... A school break-up with all its accompanying excitement of exams., mark reading etc., followed by the fun of the Dress Rehearsals and the Performance itself, is an event which no boy ought to miss; it forms a period which he can never forget, and those who stay to the end and 'see it through' go away for their holidays with feelings of satisfaction that they have fought out the fight, played the game, and done their utmost for their school. This last a school demands and expects from every boy; we are one community, making a common effort; we must have a corporate enthusiasm; a self-sacrificing spirit on the part of all. Surely, to secure this and all the essence of character that goes with it, it is worth while making some effort, even at the cost of inconvenience or trouble. To deprive a boy of opportunities of this kind is to take from his school life its most precious memories and to encourage in his character the fatal tendency to think that 'nothing matters'. Let it never be forgotten that school and all it implies or ought to imply, is a boy's life.

At Christmas the school revived *King Henry IV, Part I*, which was a great success: '... the most striking feature of the performance was the ease and confidence of the boys themselves. This, no doubt, was the result of frequent rehearsals, and one which only Mr Fisher's energy and perseverance could possibly achieve'. The school went to see *Iolanthe*. Four boys went to the box office at 6.15 a.m. to secure tickets 'and fought their way in risk of life and limb'.

The magazine also included articles on 'April 23rd: St George's Day and Shakespeare's Birthday', 'A Visit to the 'Queen Elizabeth' (The Warship)', 'Gunpowder' and a poem, 'A Day in Bed'. WWI was still remembered – this time in a poem, 'November 11th' (Fig.27).

**Fig.27: Armistice Poem, Wintersloe Magazine, 1920.**



The School revived the Athletics Sports in 1920 at Reddings, the first since 1914, but the Four Miles Cross-Country was 'utterly spoiled by a combination of beastly weather and 'agricultural meanness still beastlier'. The track left the fields for a lane, but '... the farmer living near the spot was actually sneak enough to pick up all the papers for a distance of 40

yards or so along the lane, and throw it down in another direction, which took the boys more than a mile out of their way’.

The next magazine was issued in March 1923, a gap of almost three years caused by lack of funds. The School News states that 1921 was a ‘high-water mark’ for Wintersloe, because the roll reached sixty-three pupils, but draws attention to problems relating firstly to the number of boys who stay only two or three terms because the family leave the district and secondly to the attitude that some of the boys’ parents take up respecting discipline that assists ‘the boy to evade or escape his liabilities at school’. Parents were admonished for doing the pupil’s homework, allowing boys to take time off on schooldays, criticising school disciplinary methods, providing boys with excuses to avoid games and their opposition to homework.

We find the boy is healthiest, happiest, and manliest who does a full day’s work, ending with a full evening’s prep. He is tired when he has finished and so he ought to be, but he is the most regular in his attendance, he most enjoys his games and his holidays, he is the best tempered, the best principled and will undoubtedly make the best man. Modern methods seem all directed towards making everything easier and lighter for boys, both physically and mentally; they must ride everywhere they go –if not on bicycles, then on buses, trams or motors: nobody ever dreams of saying ‘you must walk’: footer – cross-country running – even cricket is often considered too strenuous: even in clothing he is made too comfortable: witness his insidious woollen scarfs, and waistcoats; he is allowed too many luxuries, eats too many sweets and is given too much money. Then there are the effort-saving devices in his school work; all his text-books are ingeniously planned with that end in view; so are his maps, his diagrams, his tables, his instruments; he is read to, lectured to, sung to, acted to, talked to (nicely by itinerant parsons); the gramophone, the cinema and the wireless are all forced into this iniquitous effort-saving system. One begins to wonder what, soon, there will be left for him to do, find, work out, search for, or calculate, for himself. Obviously this growing menace to the energy, patience, perseverance and self-reliance of our boys must be checked. They must be called upon to do, not allowed to be done for; if life is a hard and stern thing, they must be prepared for it by hard and stern methods. Boys as a rule will give you the least they can: so you must demand plenty. There are but a few willing horses which you have the chance to overdrive (and you soon find out which they are): in the great majority of cases it is the spur that is required not the curb.

Some institutions and events given up during the war had not been revived, including the Annual Bonfire, the School Excursion and the Photographic Exhibition. The Walking Section walked the Abberley Hills, the Clee Hills, Knowle, Lapworth, Umberslade and Tanworth. Six productions took place, including the plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* (Fig.7) and the operas *The Cobbler’s Dilemma*, *The Pirates of Penzance* (Fig.8) and *Robin Hood*. The magazine noted problems that occurred when *Macbeth* was performed:

The only feeble feature of the 1922 Play was the behaviour of some of the Old Boys who had been asked to help as stewards ... Their special function seemed to be

smoking cigarettes in the hall: congregating in the kitchen during the interval to the annoyance of those who were in charge of refreshments and generally clearing up the latter after the interval was over. Some made their way upstairs to the boy's dressing room, presumably to get up a rag - although they knew quite well that nobody is allowed there, but the boys themselves. We like to see as many as possible of our old boys present, providing they are keen on the Play, but we are not holding a series of social evenings for the Old Boys and we wish they would recognise, more than they do, that on those three nights of the year the 'Play's the thing'.

In 1921 the school visited Stratford for the Shakespeare Festival, travelling there by car and motor lorry, and saw a disappointing *Macbeth*. In Birmingham, a party saw the D'Oyly Carte Company in *Patience*.<sup>25</sup> The magazine recorded a 'Serious outbreak, at Wintersloe, of the D'Oyly Carte craze in all its most virulent form' in 1922 with boys queuing early for tickets for *Gondoliers*, forty-three boys taking their seats, the 'invasion in force of tramcars at Kings Heath and Moseley at 6.15 p.m.', 'an imposing display of black coats and Eton collars' and, when going for the special bus, outsiders being 'kept at bay by points of umbrellas'. Outbreaks of measles in 1921 and mumps in 1922 had disastrous consequences, but the school fared comparatively well: it did not close as many other schools did, due to 'the large classrooms and the amount of fresh air admitted to them'. The next issue of The Wintersloe Magazine was published in February 1925. The School News wrote that the successful boys 'owe their success more to development of character than to any phenomenal intellect: what they learnt was the habit of industry and *taking interest* in their work: pertinacity and cheerful response to every call of duty'. Parents were criticised for not being concerned about the school '*as an active community*' – not coming 'to see him play cricket or football', a play or an opera. 'Is it not our business to foster *esprit de corps* in boys?'

... does it matter whether he is a good citizen or not; or even whether he is patriotic or not? If a boy cannot be induced to feel an interest in his school and work for it and make sacrifices for it, he must not be expected later on to work or sacrifice anything for his country.

Writing this on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the thought rises irresistibly to the mind: are we worthily following the examples of our nineteen Wintersloe heroes? Are we putting duty first as they did? Do they not remind us that we must live for duty and if necessary die for it? The duty of a soldier is no more sacred than that of a boy at school and the schoolboy that shirks the discipline of his school is just as great a coward as the soldier that runs from the enemy.

The 1925 magazine reported the Four Miles Cross-Country runs at Tanworth-in-Arden, followed by tea at the Bell Inn, the distribution of cups, medals and cricket bats won in 1922, the 1923 Athletic Sports, the cricket and rugger seasons and vaccination for all boys

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<sup>25</sup> The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company was a professional light opera company that, from the 1870s until 1982, staged Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy operas nearly year-round in the UK and sometimes abroad.

in 1923. The report on rugger added advice on skills, but also remarked on the 'wretched condition' of the boys, who, 'after a five or six minutes period of strenuous play ... seem completely done in'. Mr Fisher suggested this was because they are 'putting nothing into it' and proclaimed that 'What we want in games is hard play, as we want hard work in school'.

The Walking Section went on all-day 'tramps' to Pershore, Pershore Abbey and Elmley Castle, unfortunately 'spoilt by the inevitable officiousness and loquacity of the curator', and over the Malvern Hills in 1924, but only five boys turned out.

For years we have tried to encourage hill climbing because it is the best possible recreation for boys. Let them get a fascination for the hills and they will know later on where and how to spend their holidays ... And yet the inglorious attractions of sitting in motors, watching footer matches, gazing at the 'flicks', listening-in, and, above all, doing nothing are so strong and contagious that only 5 out of 55 belong to our Walking Section.

**Fig.28: The Wintersloe Honours Board.**<sup>26</sup>



In 1923 and 1924 the *Comedy of Errors* and *Pinafore* were revived, the third Wintersloe production of *Julius Caesar* was performed and in June 1924 a school party numbering forty-two attended the Prince of Wales' Theatre to see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mr

<sup>26</sup> Photographed in 1980 by the Fisher family at Drabbington, the home of Cedric Fisher.



Henry Baynton's Company.<sup>27</sup> Rehearsals for *Twelfth Night*, began, but were bedevilled by colds and flu. After the last performance the cast and stewards, about forty in all, were entertained to supper by the Misses Fisher in the upstairs schoolroom which had been suitably decorated and a gramophone installed. Mr Fisher was given a 'handsome reading lamp', the girls a 'huge box of chocolates' and Cedric Fisher 'a watch chain on the occasion of his 21st'. In January 1925 'Mr and Mrs Stilton' presented the school with an Honours Board (Fig.28) and a party of forty-eight went to see the D'Oyly Carte performance of *The Mikado*.

The 1927 magazine stated that 'in connection with the work of the school during the last eighteen months, there is nothing very exciting to record', but it again expressed concerns about pupils' attitudes:

As is now pretty generally the case, where it is a matter of work, the great thing seems to be to do the minimum; and if this, contemptable as it is, is one of the characteristic features of the age, we live in, we must expect, I suppose, to see it present in schools as elsewhere. It must, however, none the less be deplored by all, and particularly by teachers whose one business it is to infuse not only a willingness to work, but a real delight in working. Most boys have not sufficient sense of duty to feel they must and ought to work, and so we are told that we must arouse in them interest in their work and make that the motive power. This latter seems to be the one aim of teaching at the present time, and every conceivable method has of late years been employed to arouse interests in boys who do not want to work. The system will ultimately be found to be a failure.

What, then, is the matter? Well, it is character that is lacking. All these modern dodges in so-called Education not only do not form character; they actually encourage lack of character. We must get back to the root of the trouble and begin by instilling principle; we must from the first bring up our boys in the belief that work is the chief object of life and that their aim must be to do, not the minimum, but the maximum. It must become in them a natural thing to work and an unnatural thing to idle ... Once a boy is forming character, these things awaken their own interest in him and he becomes – a man.

How best can this character be developed in boys? By discipline only; real, at home as well as at school ... Failings must not be overlooked; breaches of discipline must not be excused; all tendencies to selfishness must be stifled; boys must not be taught to regard themselves as so important; they must be *contenti parvo*, and accustomed to regard every form of greediness (especially money) as detestable. Then, they must learn to rough it, particularly in the matter of exercise. Nowadays boys get nothing like sufficient exercise: a couple of games of Rugby per week is not enough unless constant natural exercise goes with it. Boys have no business to

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<sup>27</sup> Henry Baynton was born in Moseley in 1892 and died in London in 1951. He was a British Shakespearean actor and actor-manager credited with playing Hamlet 2,000 times. In 1920 Baynton formed his own theatrical company and toured the provinces between 1926 and 1930 appearing in the works of Shakespeare and various other plays. He was made bankrupt and forced to disband his theatrical company in 1930 and was then reduced to giving acting and elocution lessons in Birmingham earning about £3 a week.

be carried to school in motor cars and buses and trams, or to sit in the car all their Saturday afternoons; it is luxurious, enfeebling, gives no outlet for natural energy, and induces idleness. Boys have too many indulgencies, too much money in their pockets, too many pleasures; they therefore grow up soft and languid, shirking all that is unpleasant or troublesome instead of fighting and vanquishing it: and they are bowled over at the least hardship.

1925 was the year that the Wintersloe Old Boys Club (WOBC) was formed with between forty and fifty members and a subscription of 5s. Dramatic, Rugger and Tennis Sections were initiated. The Dramatic Section opened its career with two short pieces at Wintersloe Medal Night in 1925, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Trial by Jury* and, in 1927, *Patience*. The Rugger Section had a few matches and finally obtained a ground in 1925-6 at Kings Norton. The Tennis Section played at Alcester Lanes End grounds one evening a week. The 1925 magazine noted the unveiling of the Honours Board presented by Mr and Mrs Stilton after which the whole school was entertained by WOBC, its outbreak of activity. In June a party of forty-one visited the Prince of Wales Theatre by special bus to see *Ruddigore*.

The cricket season was disappointing:

Most of the boys, however, showed no great desire to learn the game: they just stood in the field and stopped a few balls that came their way, and then sat down, apparently exhausted, during their own side's innings. Cricket, perhaps more than any other game offers great opportunities for slacking, and of course boys don't fail to seize them.

In July 1925 the school put on *The Cavalier*, its 13th opera, and 'the whole piece went through with an abundance of life and go'. In December *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed. In February 1926 a School Party of forty-two went to the Prince of Wales Theatre to see *Princess Ida* by the D'Oyly Carte Company. In April 1926 the WOBC gave two performances of *Patience* and there was an Excursion to Tanworth for the Four Miles. May 1926 was wet, sports were postponed and cricket begun, but in July the Walking Section managed a day's tramp - Little Whitely to Knightwick over Woodberry Hill, Berrow Hill and the Ankerdine. *Ulysses* was revived. In December congratulations were sent to **J. Verralls** on the heroic conduct he displayed as wireless operator on 'Aldworth' when disabled by a gale in mid-Atlantic. Mr and Mrs Sproston presented a magic lantern to the school to commemorate the seven years that their boy, Gordon, had spent at Wintersloe.

In February 1929, the school issued another magazine. Unfortunately the first two pages of our copy have been cut out. Page 3 follows on from negative views about boys seen in other editions:

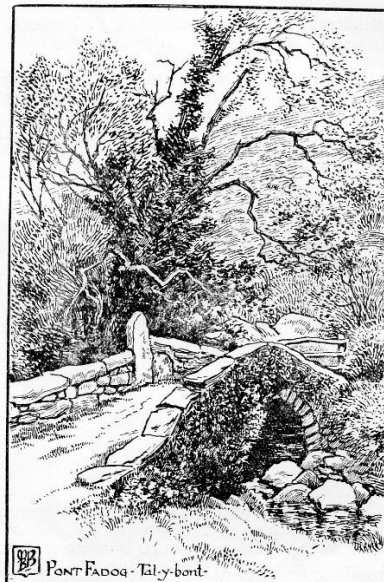
We offer boys every opportunity for action, in school and out; our chief aim is to instil a desire to do things; to strive to accomplish something, whether it be learning a page of history, producing a photograph, or walking a mile to school every morning; so long as they do it, as we say, 'off their own bat'. We find whatever direction our efforts take that we are up against the 'too much trouble' difficulty.

Surely the joy of achievement is the greatest joy in life, and boys seem to be growing up without once feeling it. They are taken to shows and entertainments; to hear this and see that: and they know or think they know, something of all these things; but what is really vital – the desire and delight to do things themselves is absent.

The February 1929 edition contained the usual School News for 1926-1929 including the use of the Lantern presented by Mr and Mrs Sproston for a talk on 'What the Walker Sees' and successful theatrics (*King Henry IV Part I*, *The Cobbler's Dilemma*, *Trial by Jury*, *Cox and Box* and *Romeo and Juliet*). The school visited the Prince of Wales Theatre to see the D'Oyly Carte Company perform the *Mikado* and the Midland Institute to see *Iolanthe* and *Ruddigore* by the Gilvan Society at very reduced terms by the 'kindness of Mr Barlow'.<sup>28</sup> The Walking Sections traversed the Malvern, Clent, Walton and Romsley Hills, and the Wrekin. A Photographic Competition followed of the two best photos taken of the Wrekin. The school enjoyed a lantern display on 'N. Wales: from Dee to Sea', using eighty slides lent by the G.W.R. Publicity Department.

Congratulations were sent to **F. Samworth** who saw someone in difficulties in the sea and brought a man safely to shore. He was awarded the Certificate of the Royal Humane Society.<sup>29</sup> This magazine included an article, 'Pont Fadog', Barmouth, on the surrounding lakes and mountains, accompanied by a 'little etching' done by Mr Blaydon, the Art teacher (Fig.29). New to the magazine in 1929 was the Cross-Word Competition, with a prize of a bound volume of The Wintersloe Magazine (Fig.30).

**Fig.29: 'Pont Fadog', Barmouth, The Wintersloe Magazine, 1929.**

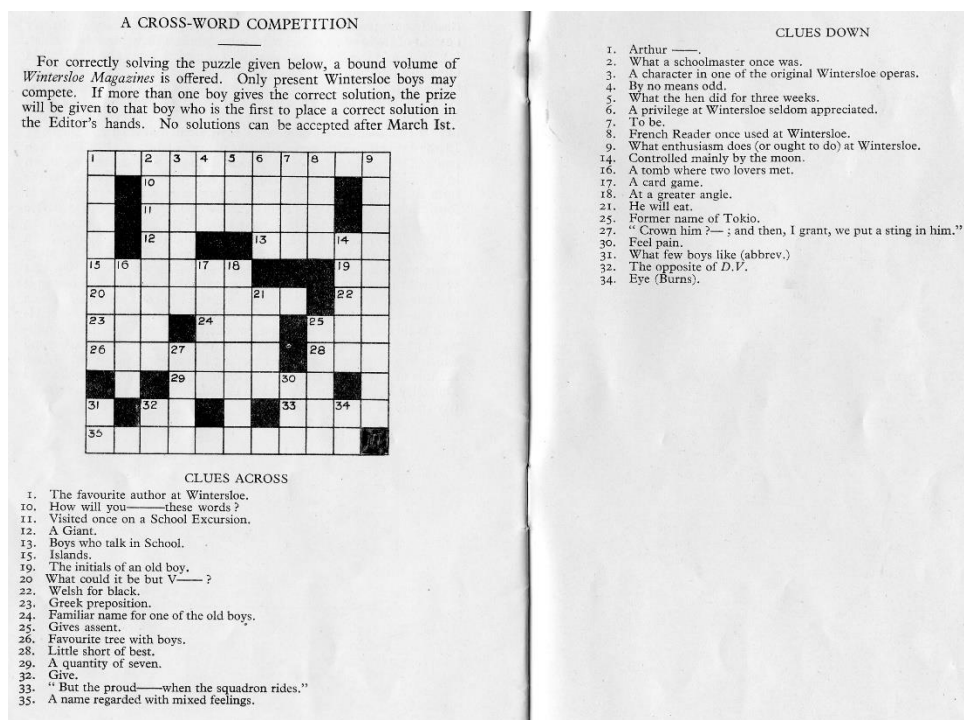


<sup>28</sup> The Gilvan Amateur Operatic Society performed *The Mikado* on Wednesday October 22, 1930, at the Midland Institute at 7.30 p.m., as part of the Birmingham University 'Carnival', a Rag Week event.

<sup>29</sup> The Royal Humane Society bronze medal was introduced in 1837. It is awarded to people who have put their own lives at great risk to save or attempt to save someone else. It is accompanied by an A4 size certificate.

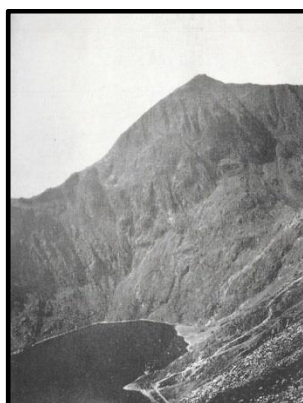
The Wintersloe Old Boys Club held its first dance in February 1927 at St Anne's Church Hall, Park Hill, which was attended by about ninety people. Sadly, in March 1927 'the whole of the club's funds were misappropriated by one of its most trusted members'. The shortfall was covered by members, meaning 'we could start once more with a balance in hand'. The Club organised a second and a third Annual Dance at St Anne's Hall. The club produced *Iolanthe* and *Ruddigore*, but the Dramatic Section was then abandoned.

**Fig.30: The First Crossword, 1929.**



The next magazine was published two years later in March 1931. Page one is a photograph, 'Summit of Snowdon from Bwlch Goch' by C.H. Fisher (Fig.31). The School News followed a familiar pattern, but a first was the celebration of the 1929 marriage of Frank Samworth (a Wintersloe pupil 1913-1921) to Phyllis Perkins, sister of R. Perkins who left Wintersloe in 1913. 'The School assembled outside Moseley Church and cheered the happy pair as they drove off'. Rugger and sports afternoons were impossible in March 1929 'on account of frost' and was replaced by walking exercise chiefly around the Lickeys and Weatheroak.

**Fig.31: 'Summit of Snowdon' by C.H. Fisher, 1931.**





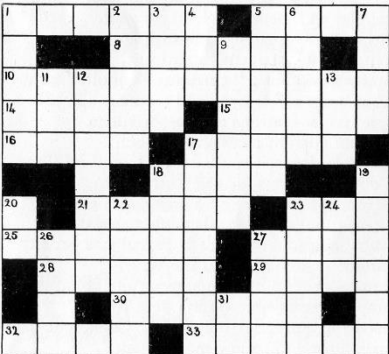
Following the 1930 Medal Night there was a Lantern Display, 'The Thames from Staines to Oxford', using slides lent by G.W.R., and later Bronwen Fisher gave a Lantern lecture on 'Greek Art' and S. H. Fisher on 'Snowdonia'. The Walking Section managed four trips from Northfield, Barnt Green and Hampton-in-Arden. The Annual Whole Day Excursion saw pupils take the 8 a.m. train from Snow Hill to Cleobury Mortimer and then a walk of twenty-one miles across the Clee Hills to catch the 7p.m. train at Tenbury. In 1930 the Annual Day's Walk went by train to Wooferton at 9.55 a.m. through Richard's Castle, along the Teme River to Ludlow Castle, Caynham (encampment) and back to Wooferton, a total of fifteen miles. 'What a day! And for 3s 6d each!'. *Pirates of Penzance* and *Macbeth* were put on, but the school opera was postponed because of an outbreak of measles. In 1930 the opera, *Robin Hood*, first produced in 1922, was revived. The December Shakespeare play was *Coriolanus*, when 'The boys worked well at their parts and there was no attempt at all to shirk rehearsals'. This was the last Shakespeare Play in an unbroken run of thirty-four years. Theatre parties saw *King Richard II* by the Stratford Festival Company, travelling by special bus, the D'Oyle Carte Company's performance of *Cox and Box* and *Pinafore* in 1930 and in 1931 their *Trial by Jury* and *Pirates*. A day's holiday was given to the school to celebrate a pupil being elected to an Open Entrance Scholarship at Sedbergh School and thirty boys and seven ladies went by bus to the Long Mynd. The magazine announced that six months previously Wintersloe Old Boys Club had terminated its existence.

A Shakespeare Quotation Cross-Word was the final page in this magazine (Fig.32).

Fig.32: A Shakespearean Crossword, 1931.

**A SHAKESPEARE QUOTATION CROSS-WORD.**

How many of these quotations from Shakespeare can you complete? A small but appropriate prize will be given to the boy who sends in the first correct solution. No solutions can be accepted after March 31st. Boys are expected to receive no assistance in this competition.



**CLUES ACROSS.**

1. "Tarry, rash——" *M. N. D.*
5. "——! 'twill not appear." *Hamlet.*
8. "O ——, I'll speak to thee in silence." *Cymb.*
10. "The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of —— all compact." *M. N. D.*
14. "Some ——, or unusual prodigy." *T. of Sh.*
15. "I will be strange, ——, in yellow stockings." *T. N.*
16. "And who is England's king but great York's ——?" *R. III.*
17. "How in my words soever she be ——" *Hamlet.*
18. "He hath a Rosalind of a better —— than you." *A. Y. L.*
21. "With inky —— and rotten parchment bonds." *R. II.*
23. "And desire you to —— them by tomorrow night." *M. N. D.*
25. "Who doth —— my contemplation." *T. A.*
27. "O —— the door" *R. and J.*
28. "You cannot——into dukedoms there." *Hen. V.*
29. "'Tis very ——; she'll not come down tonight." *R. and J.*
30. "Not —— itself were dim enough." *J. C.*
32. "Et non pour les dames d'honneur d'——" *Hen. V.*
33. "I do —— false perjured Proteus." *T. G. of V.*

**CLUES DOWN.**

1. "—— ne'er shook hands nor bade farewell to him." *Macb.*
2. "And let us to the —— all to dinner." *C. of E.*
3. "Therefore, my lords, —— no happy hour." *Hen. V.*
4. "Hey —— nonny, nonny, hey nonny." *Hamlet.*
5. "—— those measles  
Which we disdain should —— us." *Coriol.*
6. "Is thy —— here?" *Hamlet.*
7. "And merrily —— the stile-a." *W. T.*
9. "The —— do better upon them." *Macb.*
11. "Here come —— voices." *Coriol.*
12. "While I thy —— cheeks do coy." *M. N. D.*
13. "If you be ——, sir, I can mend you." *J. C.*
17. "I am ——," *Macb.*
18. "I can give the —— leave to chide." *Hen. VI.*
19. "—— I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my ——," *Macb.*
20. "I —— changed." *Oth.*
22. "Have you any ——s to lift me up again?" *Hen. IV.*
23. "O, I am out of breath in this fond ——" *M. N. D.*
24. "Arm, arm and ——" *Macb.*
26. "—— one that feeds  
On abjects, —— and imitations." *J. C.*
27. "I am not a —— but I thank the gods I am foul." *A. Y. L.*
31. "If your wife —— not a mad woman." *M. of V.*

This was the last Wintersloe Magazine. The success of the School and its high ideals were set out once again:

Our progress was undoubtedly threatened at one period by the more or less rough element which began to find its way into the school and which had at all costs to be corrected, suppressed, or removed. Simultaneously we found ourselves up against another class of boy, if anything, even more difficult to deal with: those spoilt and pampered at home, who under school discipline continually whine and try to shirk. By doing all we could to eliminate the first and by making a firm stand against the second, we think we have made ourselves into a much more satisfactory community. It has been a difficult and costly task, but unquestionably the only one to be pursued if the character and ideals of the school were to be preserved. Whatever happens, we cannot and will not lower our ideals. They may be more difficult, nowadays, to attain, but there they are and we must try to reach them.

We are trying to develop those qualities which seem at the present time to be in greatest danger of decay – Reverence and Obedience; Unselfishness; a sense of Duty and Responsibility. We want to see in boys a love of work as well as a love of play; as much competition in the school room as in the playing field; more effort to achieve things and less craving for vulgar pleasures and idle amusements. We want to see boys acquiring self respect which will not permit them to follow feebly the stupid tastes and ignorant habits of all and any with whom they come into contact’.

Howard Fisher died unexpectedly aged sixty-two years in December 1931 after a short bout of pneumonia. The school closed soon afterwards. Amy and Kathleen went to live at Drabbington, their cottage near Bromyard after Howard’s death. Amy died in 1963. Two Granite Crosses mark the graves of Howard and Amy Fisher in the Churchyard of Bockleton Church (Figs.33-34).

**Fig.33: The Churchyard, Bockleton Church.**<sup>30</sup>



**Fig.34: The Fisher Graves, Bockleton Church.**<sup>31</sup>



<sup>30</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

<sup>31</sup> Howard Fisher’s grave includes the School /Family motto.

**Fig.35: The Fisher Lych Gate, St Mary's Church, Moseley.<sup>32</sup>**



In 1932, a Lychgate at St. Mary's Church, Moseley, was erected in his memory (Fig.35).<sup>33</sup> The lintel features the Fisher family and school motto. The 1933 Moseley Parish Magazine recorded its dedication by the Archdeacon of Birmingham on Sunday 8 January.<sup>34</sup> The archdeacon said that the memorial marked 'the affection and esteem' in which his friends and old boys of the school held him. His 'was an influence created by the force of a character marked by uprightness and steadfastness, and zeal to carry out strongly what he put his hand to do in the vocation of his life's work'.

On his father's death Cedric wrote:

In April after a few days holidays at Drabbington, Dad contracted pneumonia and after only four or five days illness, died suddenly on 16 April 1931 at the age of 62. Apart from his appendicitis, this was the only illness he had ever had. As he lay in the bed unconscious, he was showing me the outline of his beloved Feglan at Barmouth in the shadows on the ceiling and was chanting in a voice that could be heard as far as Yeld the paradigms of irregular greek verbs. What a fitting ending for a wonderful man.<sup>35</sup>

'Virtutem extendere factis'.

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<sup>32</sup> Courtesy of Roy Cockel.

<sup>33</sup> MSHGC, (C2/D3/F5/1 & 2), Letters relating events associated with S.H. Fisher Memorial Fund. The cost of the memorial, £102, in 1930 was equivalent to approx., £4,670.11 in 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

<sup>35</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

Patrick Stevenson wrote:

Virtutem extendere factis, motto and closing phrase of the school song, means 'to develop virtue in what one does'. It was rather an austere, Latin kind of virtue that we were taught, uncompromising, restless and caustic. A lych-gate at Moseley Parish Church commemorates Wintersloe's first and only headmaster. For me it recalls that Hamlet scene, and its meaning: what we achieve depends on circumstances; what we are depends on ourselves.

## Biographies

**Amy Kate Fisher** (1874-1963), Howard Fisher's wife, was born in 1874 and died aged eighty-nine in 1963. She had domestic duties and responsibilities for boarders and attended school events. She lived out the rest of her life after Howard's death at Drabbington, the family holiday cottage near Bromyard, with Kathleen. She seemed 'unwell and incapacitated' in her later years to her grandson, George Fisher, Idwal's son. Tom, George's brother, remembers her being transported down the garden (which was on a steep incline) in a wheel barrow to watch the little grandsons playing cricket 'matches'.

On her death, Cedric wrote:

On 17<sup>th</sup> April 1963, Mother passed away peacefully, at Drabbington at the age of 89. For some years she had no use in one leg and her memory for day-to-day things was erratic. She had only gone to bed two or three days earlier 'with a cold'. The doctor didn't really do anything and I think really she died of old age – she just ran down. During the last twenty-four hours, as she lay unconscious, she repeated continuously the refrain 'Oh, I am so tired'. She had never once mentioned Dad, all those thirty two years (and one day) since he had died.

Patrick Stevenson wrote that the **Fisher children** were:

an eloquent argument for his rigorist system. He had three handsome grown-up daughters for whom we felt a proprietary affection. It was with a sense of shock rather than indignation that we learned once from a senior that Timmins II had insulted the youngest, Bronwen, – how, I don't know; but he lost face for the rest of the term.

Bronwen and Sybil paid their way through Oxford; Kathleen taught music and helped her mother with the boarders. Cedric, the elder boy, was at Charterhouse when I went to Wintersloe; Later he got his leander colours and a good degree in maths at Caius, and became a master at Westminster. When the rest of the family made their end-of-term exodus by train to their cottage at Bromyard, over thirty miles away, he walked – taking, as he modestly explained, the whole day.

Idwal, the younger boy, was my contemporary. He and my particular friend Stilton got scholarships to Radley and Rossall respectively; and the three of us met up at Oxford.



**Kathleen Fisher** (1897-1983) was involved in many Wintersloe School and Old Boys' Club activities. She was mainly responsible for the home, but also taught music. She did not marry, remaining with her mother at Drabbington. Her nephew, Idwal's son, George, remembers her as:

the supreme 'provider' of meals: cooked breakfasts, three roasts per week at lunchtime...and all with very, very primitive cooking equipment and plumbing, etc. She 'held the house-hold' together, but perhaps resented never having had a 'career' and being 'trapped' by her duties to her mother and the house-hold. She was a good musician, though, and played the organ in Thornbury Church (near Bromyard) for many years. She loved cricket, and our summer treat was a trip to New Road, Worcester, to watch a county championship game.

Tom, Kathleen's other nephew, Idwal's younger son and George's younger brother remembers how 'in the early 1970s she sent Christmas cards to Ted Heath, the Archbishop of Canterbury and John Arlott, the radio cricket commentator'.

**Bronwen Fisher** (1899-1978) was also involved in School events. She studied at St Hilda's Hall, Oxford. Bron was a teacher, initially at Bedford School and then Cheltenham Ladies College. She married an older man, but it was a short marriage. George, her nephew, found her 'great fun....a wonderful 'non-conformist' so far as 'house rules' were concerned....a breath of fresh air.....and obviously a really talented classical scholar'.

**Sybil Fisher** (1901-1983) featured in a range of Old Boys' Club theatrical performances. Sybil did not marry. Cedric said that 'the war had not helped them [Kathleen and Sybil]'. She was a teacher at Bedworth School. She retired to Drabbington and died in 1983 aged eighty-two years. George Fisher, Idwal's son, remembers Sybil as 'always happy, brisk and energetic. She was the car driver in the family, but her memory started 'to go' towards the end of her life'.

**Cedric Fisher** (1903-1986) entered Wintersloe School as a pupil in 1912 and became headboy in 1916. He was very successful academically. In July 1915 he passed the Oxford Preliminary Examinations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Honours with Distinction in Mathematics and in 1916 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Honours Oxford Junior Local Examination, passing in all subjects and achieving a distinction in Mathematics. In 1917 he won an entrance scholarship to Charterhouse, coming seventh on the list. On leaving school in 1917, the 1919 Wintersloe Magazine wrote:

His five years at Wintersloe proved him to possess a genius for work and a keen enthusiasm for everything else connected with the school. Needless to say, his departure left us with a gap in our ranks which it was difficult to fill.

In 1921 he won an Open Mathematics Scholarship at Caius College Cambridge, which gave £80 p.a. In 1926 he took a 1<sup>st</sup> Class in the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos Part I and was placed amongst the Wranglers in part II of the same tripos.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> A 'Wrangler' is a student who gains first-class honours in the final year of the university's degree in mathematics. The highest scoring student is the Senior Wrangler, the second highest is the Second Wrangler and so on.

Cedric was very involved in theatrical performances, playing Fluellen in *Henry V* in 1915 when he was 'first rate' and his 'clever imitation of the Welsh dialect, added to the humour of the part tremendously, and contrasted well with the blunt Englishman, Gower'. In 1917 he provided 'strong support' in *Pirates of Penzance* as the Major-General and as Touchstone in *As You Like It* he 'gave us some capital fooling; his dialogues with Corin and Audrey and his encounter with William and Sir Oliver Martext were really clever'. In the *Comedy of Errors* in 1919 he took the part of Antipholus of Syracuse.

He won the Wintersloe Chess Tournament in 1916, wrote articles for the magazine, such as 'My Experiences in the Air Raid' and was a member of the Walking Section. He helped set up the Wintersloe Old Boys' Club in 1925 and was in charge of the Dramatic Section and later Honorary Secretary. Cedric taught Mathematics at Westminster School and was married briefly, but his wife died. He retired to Drabington. At the time of his death, he was writing a dictionary of plants with reference to Shakespeare and the Bible, which was donated to the archive of the RHS.

George, Idwal's son, remembers Cedric as:

great fun and a person who made a really formative impact upon me and my brother [Tom]; we spent hours with him in the garden, learning how to 'dig', how to grow vegetables, how to lay water drains etc. He was always 'jolly' and incredibly knowledgeable about so many things, whether botanical or relating to Welsh mountains or local natural history.

He remembers being persuaded to ask him for help with 'A' level mathematics a few years after his retirement and worrying that he would have forgotten it all. 'Suffice to say that he taught me more in a few hours than I learned in the two years from my teachers!'

**Idwal Fisher** (1911-1983) was born in Clynog Fawr on the Llyn peninsula, one of the many cottages owned by the Fishers. He was named Idwal after the local postman who went to fetch the midwife.<sup>37</sup> He joined Wintersloe as a pupil (Figs.5-6: No.50) in September 1917 and became Headboy from Christmas 1923. He was academically successful. In December 1922 he passed the Oxford Junior Local Examination, and was placed Class III of the Honours List. In 1924 he was elected to the Entrance Exhibition at Radley College. The magazine praised him for his athletic prowess and the theatrical parts he undertook:

[He] rarely missed a game of cricket or rugger and was a keen member of the school band and walking section. These details are recorded in order to show that if a boy likes he can find time to do all these things and do them well.

He was very athletic, winning numerous prizes over the years at the Athletic Sports. He took part in many theatrical productions. In 1922 he 'did well in the more subordinate parts' in *Robin Hood*. In Dec 1922 'his rendering of the First Witch [in 'Macbeth'] was as near perfection as we should ever wish to see it' (Fig.7). His 'singing and acting was

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<sup>37</sup> Courtesy of Tom Fisher, Idwal's younger son.

excellent' in the 1923 revival of *A Comedy of Errors* when he played Dromio of Syracuse, and his performance as Cassius in *Julius Caesar* in December 1923 was 'vitality itself'. In the 1924 *Pinafore* he was 'about the sprightliest Sir Joseph Porter that anybody could wish to see'. He also joined in with the theatricals produced by the Wintersloe Old Boys' Club.

In 1928, after Radley College, he was elected to an Open Exhibition for Classics at Worcester College, Oxford. He became a school master and taught Classics at Forest School (London, pre-war). His younger son, Tom, wrote:

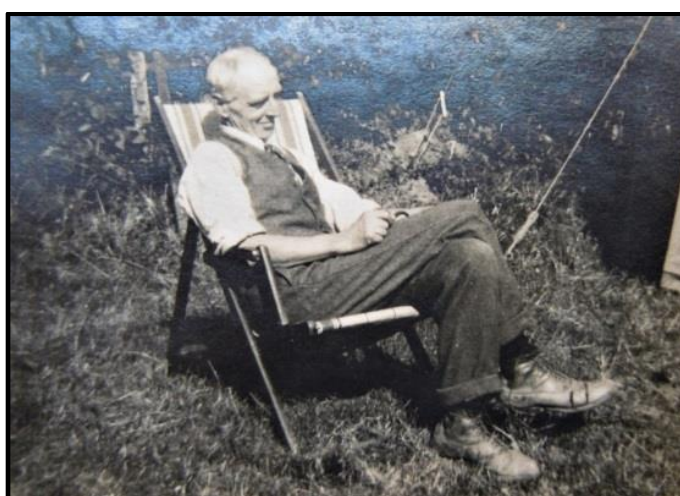
He fought in the Burma Campaign then resumed his career as a Classics teacher with a new post in Bradford. He shared the family love for walking, gardening and Gilbert and Sullivan. He was never happier than when in his own garden in Bradford, his allotment or in the family garden at Drabbington. On retirement he yearned for the better growing conditions of Herefordshire so in 1973 the family moved from Bradford to Bosbury, near Ledbury, Herefordshire (their sons, George and Tom by then were at Oxford). Thus, they were living fairly close to the family at Drabbington. He was a dedicated teacher and wonderful father. Sadly his health began to deteriorate quite soon after the move to Bosbury until his death in 1983 at the age of seventy-two years, the third of the Howard and Amy Fisher children to die that year.

His son, George Fisher, also became a teacher and rose to be a headteacher.

Idwal and his family visited Drabbington every year for about two weeks around Easter and three or four weeks in the summer holidays from when George was born until the age of eighteen. The family stayed in a railway carriage (converted to holiday home) in the garden. Wales certainly meant a lot to all the family as well as flora and fauna and Gilbert and Sullivan (a real passion – George still has his uncle's records!).

## Fisher Family Photos<sup>38</sup>

Howard Fisher, c.1920s.



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<sup>38</sup> Courtesy of the Fisher family.

**The Fisher Family, Wales, 1919.<sup>39</sup>**



**The Fisher Boys Acting, 1923.**



**Howard, Cedric and Idwal, early 1920s**



**Howard and Amy visiting Cedric, Cambridge, 1924**



**Amy and Kathleen, Drabbington, 1940s**



<sup>39</sup> L-R: Kathleen, Howard, Amy, Idwal, Sybil, and Cedric. The family have Cedric's 'walking diaries' which span eighty years and describe walks and family holidays and include photos such as this.



George and Tom Fisher with their mother at The Railway Carriage, Drabbington, 1960s.<sup>40</sup>



## Gordon Sproston

Gordon Sproston entered Wintersloe School in May 1919 and left in September 1926 (Figs.5-6: No.14). He rose to become Headboy. The Magazine stated that he was:

another boy who caught the true Wintersloe spirit. Though not especially distinguished in Games, Sproston was always keen and always turned out for anything that came along. He probably holds a record for the number of times he appeared on the Wintersloe stage, where he was always a success whether in plays or operas. While he was headboy he did much for the school library and ... was an ardent member of the Walking Section.

He passed Oxford Junior Local Exam in 1923 and in 1924 The Oxford Junior in Division I.

In 1921 he 'sang in a manner that gave promise of future great things' in *Pirates of Penzance*, taking on the role of Ruth (Fig.8). In December 1921 he took the part of Ophelia in *Hamlet* when 'The quiet, simple, half- frightened manner which he developed contributed largely to his success and his acting in the mad scene was touching in the extreme'. In 1922 he played Marion in *Robin Hood* and Ross in *Macbeth* and 'made the most of his role' (Fig.7). In 1923 he played Luciana in *A Comedy of Errors* and in December 1923, Portia in *Julius Caesar*. In 1924 he 'made a charming Buttercup and sang very nicely' in *Pinafore*, and was a 'sweet and very natural' Viola in *Twelfth Night* later in the year. His Markham was 'all that could be desired and was the embodiment 'of dignity and vigour' in *Cavalier* in 1925. He played Oberon 'very capably' in December 1925 in *A Midsummer*

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<sup>40</sup> George and Tom Fisher with their mother at Drabbington.

*Night's Dream*, the school's twenty-ninth play, and was Ulysses in the 1926 *Ulysses* school opera. In 1926 he was King Henry in *King Henry IV, Part I*, though he had left the school the previous September, 1926. He too was part of the group setting up the Old Boys' Club and took part in their productions.

Gordon Sproston remained in Moseley and became a gold and silver chain manufacturer. He lived at Greystones, 55 Billesley Lane and was an active member of the community. He loved gardens, as the Moseley Society Memorial to him shows and worked on the plots in the Moseley village car park over many years.

**Gordon Sproston, Maid Marion, *Robin Hood*, 1923.**



**Moseley Society Memorial to Gordon Sproston**



## **J.P. Stevenson (Patrick)**

Patrick Stevenson was born in Llandaff, South Wales in 1910, the only child of older, well-to-do parents. His father was an engineer who gave up his Welsh practice and moved the family to Moseley in 1916, where he became a buyer for an engineering offshoot of the War Office.

For seven years, before the clouds gathered, we lived in a pleasant house in Moseley, one of six built on what had been an orchard. Across the road there were tennis courts. Beyond, elms marked the line of Belle Walk as far as Lord Mayor Sayer's rookery, where the sun set in winter, when the trees were leafless and lacy. At Midsummer it set behind the right-hand elm, towards a paddock that grazed two

or three bullocks and a manor house that stood in decay, its premises occupied by Belgian refugees, its grounds cut up as allotments.<sup>41</sup>

Patrick entered Wintersloe in May 1919 at the same time as Gordon Sproston (Figs.5-6: No.51) and left in 1924. He was successful academically, passing in 1923 the Oxford Senior Local Examination with distinction in Latin and winning a KEHS Foundation Scholarship. He travelled to school first class each day by Midland Railway and saw 'the back-to-back hovels of the poorest of Birmingham's poor'.<sup>42</sup>

In 1922 Patrick took part in *Robin Hood* when he was described with another pupil as 'about the hardest workers amongst the chorus', and in *Macbeth* (Fig.7). In 1923 he was in *Julius Caesar*. In 1923 Mr Stevenson gave 'an important addition to the electrical installation connected with our stage' in 'commemoration of his son's successful career at Wintersloe'. Patrick was a member of the Walking Section and spent time at the weekends with Gordon Sproston.<sup>43</sup> Just after going to KEHS life changed: his family slipped down the social ladder and they moved to a smaller house in a less attractive neighbourhood.

On leaving KEHS in July 1927 he went into the Westminster Bank and in 1930 he was admitted to St Catherine's College, Oxford, to read history. His parents 'left the dark little house in Birmingham' in 1932 and moved south, first to Dorset and then Bournemouth.<sup>44</sup> In 1933 Patrick left Oxford with a third class honours degree and joined Alpine College where the 'austere master-boy relationship of my own school days, only six years before, seemed far away'.<sup>45</sup> He trained for the ministry at Cheshunt in 1935, was subsequently ordained deacon for the Anglo-Catholic Church of St Mary-the-Less, Lambeth and held curacies at Bournemouth and Hillington, near Sandringham. In 1939, he joined the 54<sup>th</sup> (City of London) Regiment, a territorial unit, was sent to France and joined the 1<sup>st</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Middlesex, ending on the Dunkirk beach. He continued in the army as chaplain to various units in Flanders and Italy, ultimately joining the regular army. He was elected to the Athenaeum at the age of thirty-one in 1941. Following V.E. Day he was in the army of occupation in Italy and Austria and then in 1946 was posted to the Assisi Centre, located between Venice and Trieste, as an instructor to chaplains, which he later led. He then went to Northern Ireland and whilst there 'burnt his fingers with the Ulster establishment'.<sup>46</sup> At this time he 'wrote the first of a long run of winning entries for *New Statesman* competitions. In 1951 he went as senior chaplain to Hamburg, leaving in 1954, effectively ending his army career. The family moved to Australia, to St Nicholas' Church, Cockburn Sound, south of Freemantle, and then on to Wongan Hills where he was a rector to three thousand square miles of West Australian Wheatbelt. In 1962 he chaired the building of a £50,000 church. After 1968 he was the Melbourne correspondent of *Le Monde*. To Australians he is best known as a campaigner for divorce law reform in church

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<sup>41</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, p.27. His home was most likely in the top end of Mayfield Road and the Mansion, Mansion House. Belle Walk was home to the *Newton Lawn Tennis Club*.

<sup>42</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, pp.33-34.

<sup>43</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, p.37.

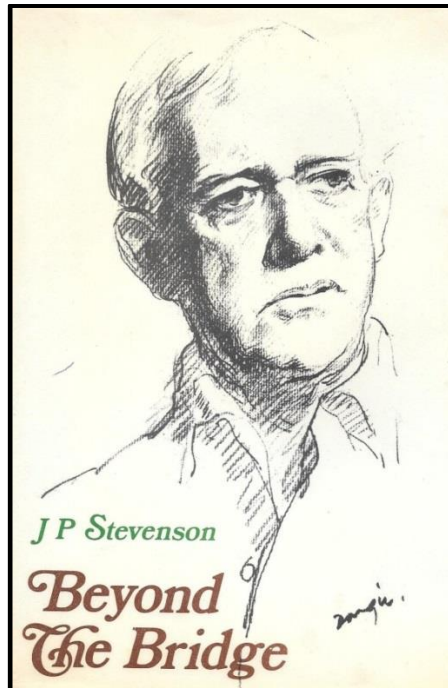
<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, p.59.

<sup>45</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*, p.53. Alpine College, Arveyes-Villars, Upper Rhone Valley, Switzerland, was a small high-fee establishment for boys needing more individual attention than the English public schools offered and run on Montessori lines.

<sup>46</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*: Book jacket blurb.

and state; but for a time he was a Protector of Aborigines. In 1973 he wrote his autobiography, *Beyond the Bridge*.

**Book Cover, *Beyond the Bridge*, J.P. Stevenson, 1973.<sup>47</sup>**



**Janet Berry, 2021**

**With many thanks to the Fisher family for sharing their recollections and their primary sources.**

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<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, *Beyond the Bridge*: Book jacket devised by Elgan Davies from an original portrait of the author by Sir William Dargie.