

SOUTHGATE COUNTY SCHOOL

THE HEADMASTER'S REPORT

December 1947.

PRIZE-GIVINGS.

First I wish to voice a warm welcome to our chief visitor. On several Speech Day occasions in the past, we have been honoured by the company of the reigning Chairman of the Middlesex County Council and this evening we have with us the present holder of that high office, Alderman Messer. Alderman Messer has been well known in North Middlesex for several years, for his many public services.

For finding time to pay us this visit among the many calls on him, I do most sincerely thank him.

We are honoured also by the presence of his Worship the Mayor and the Mayoress of Southgate, Councillor and Mrs. John Barker. We wish them a happy and useful year of office.

Numbers. We started the year 1946-47 with 609 pupils and finished with 582. At the present time we number 610. The corresponding number a year ago was 607.

The number of pupils in our sixth forms is 97, 60 in first year sixth forms, and 37 in the second or third year. We should of course like more space, and I am sometimes asked when we expect to move into more commodious and up-to-date quarters. The only reply I can give is that if we move, the day of doing so is a year nearer - or a year less far off - than it was a year ago.

EXAMINATION RESULTS. During the year 81 pupils obtained the General School Certificate, of whom 43 qualified for exemption from Matriculation. At the Higher School Examination, 23 passed, 19 in Science, 1 in Arts, and 3 in Commerce. In open examinations for University awards, 3 of our pupils were successful. Roy Philo obtained an Engineering Exhibition at Queen Mary College, John Moss obtained a Royal Scholarship, and William Norton a Bursary at University College, Leicester. Eight of our pupils, 5 boys and 3 girls, secured places at University Colleges, and are now following courses for University degrees, three in Pure Science, two in Engineering, one in Arts, one in medicine, and one in Estate Management.

Two other successes of our 18 year olds deserve mention, The first is that of Alan Flexman, who passed the examination for

entry to the Executive Civil Service, being placed 29th in 546 candidates, a highly creditable performance. He is now doing his military service, and will take up his appointment when that is finished.

The second is, I think, the first of its kind to come to this school. There is now one common examination for the ~~entrance~~^{entry} of cadets to the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Army, and the Royal Air Force. This year a Naval Cadetship was won by John Margetts who was 21st in the whole list, and 11th in the Naval candidates.

Moreover, after interview, he was high enough on the final list to be selected for the Executive Branch of the Navy, and he is now a cadet at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. This meritorious achievement must be most gratifying to Margetts and to his parents. We congratulate the young man and wish him well in his career.

I should like to say at this point that the Armed Forces of the Crown offer good careers to boys of ability who are that way inclined. In addition to the ordinary recruitment, entry is possible at the artificer or apprentice stage at 16 years of age, and at 18 at cadet level. There are various branches to suit all aptitudes, and promotion is the reward of ability and merit. Colonels Blimp and Chinstrap are not now representative of high ranking officers, if indeed they ever were.

Before leaving the subject of Examinations, it is perhaps fitting that I should mention the Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council which was issued a few months ago, and has received notice in the press. This report has prompted discussion concerning our examination system, as it is intended to do, and the opinion is often expressed that examinations have a crippling and deadening influence on the schools. With this view I disagree. Examinations can be a tyrannical master, but they can also be made a useful servant. In my opinion, the schools examinations have had a most beneficial effect, and far from chaining us down, they buoy us up. Syllabuses and regulations are constructed^{and revised} by the best brains the country possesses for the purpose, and opportunity is provided for consultation and interchange of ideas, between examiners and teachers. By conformity to schemes so produced, standards of work have been enhanced, schools have been protected from the operation of faddists

and cranks, training has been forthcoming in perseverance and steadfastness, and guidance and purpose have been given to the classroom activities of both teachers and taught. This accords with the Report, section 27 of which reads - "We are anxious that any effect which the examinations may have on standards of work should be beneficial and stimulating."

The new proposals will be fully discussed by interested bodies, before any new regulations are issued, but whatever new nomenclature may emerge, it will remain the duty of the schools to enable boys and girls who will proceed to Universities, those who will enter the professions, and others who will wish to possess some evidence of attainment to obtain by trusted examination the appropriate qualification, awarded after assessment on some absolute national standard.

I have no wish to give examinations disproportionate emphasis in our school life, but when they are on trial I like to put in some evidence for the defence. It will continue to be our aim to meet the needs and suit the aptitude of every individual boy and girl, and to maintain a sensible midway position between two bad extremes, examination slavery on one hand and educational anarchy on the other.

DINNERS. The new dining room on our own premises was opened in October, and midday dinners cooked here are now being served to all children who have asked for them. These number 492, who are accommodated in two sittings. The change over from preparing some 120 dinners in our domestic subjects room to 500 in the new premises was accomplished smoothly, and the meals service is excellent. For efficient service I wish to express appreciation and thanks to the canteen staff, and especially to the chief cook, Mrs. Horrex.

SPORTS AND GAMES. All the sports and games of the school are in a healthy and flourishing condition, for which we are primarily indebted, for their whole hearted service, to Miss Tofield and Mr. Robertson. The best results in inter-school events have been these :- At the North Middlesex Schools Swimming Gala, the senior girls team secured first place and won the shield. Our name as winners last appeared on this shield 15 years ago. At the All Middlesex Swimming Finals, the senior boys came second in 23 and the girls third in 14

schools.

At the North Middlesex Athletic Meeting in the summer, our boys were first in the intermediate section.

In the Cross Country run, 23 schools competed and Southgate County School was 2nd.

At the present time, Football is going strong, and on most Saturdays there are five teams playing.

A fortnight ago in the match London Boys versus Glasgow Boys, played on the Arsenal ground, one of our boys, David Andrews, was in the London Eleven. We congratulate Andrews on this distinction.

I should like to report here the gift of a games trophy to Southgate Senior Schools. Our good friend, Mrs. Fairfield has very kindly presented a Cup for Netball, to be competed for by the girls of the five Secondary Schools of Southgate. We thank her for the presentation, which will stimulate the game, and will foster the friendliness which already exists between the schools.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES. One new one has appeared, a boys' gym group which has been meeting once a week under the leadership of Mr. Robertson.

During the term there has been a revival of the Operatic Society. When Mr. Knowles offered to act once more as producer of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, I gladly accepted his offer. Mr. Baggarley, the Music Master, undertook responsibility for the music, and rehearsals have been proceeding. We are preparing to produce "The Pirates of Penzance" next March, when we hope to have once more the support of parents and friends of the school.

The Orchestral Society must have a special mention this year as it has now reached its 25th birthday. Of the original members of 25 years ago, one I am glad to say is still with us, its founder and conductor, Mr. Smith. I think this evening Mr. Smith is experiencing a kind of Silver Jubilee glow. If so, I am sure it is justified. During the past 25 years, scores of young musicians have been helped and encouraged by Mr. Smith in the early and less tuneful years of their musical career, and put in the way of acquiring a life-long source of enjoyment. We are very grateful to Mr. Smith for this service. By way of celebration we have included in the orchestral items to be played later in the programme, the suite that was played

by the first school orchestra at the Prize Giving 25 years ago.

NATIONAL SAVINGS. I will again refer to this. The membership of the National Savings group should be very much greater than it is. Many of our children seem to be well supplied with pocket money, and could be regular contributors to National Savings, thereby combining private advantage with public service.

OLD SCHOLARS. I wish to announce here that we should like to have a Memorial to those Old Boys who lost their lives in the War. Pride of place in this Hall is rightly given to the War Memorial of the first World War, and the proposal is that two panels, one each side, recording the names of those who died in the second world war should be added to the existing memorial behind me. I am most anxious that the list of names should be complete and I shall be glad if anyone who knows of Old Boys who should be commemorated will please let me have the names. At present we have a list of 53.

An appeal for subscriptions will be issued in the New Year, and the work started as soon as materials are available. We are hoping for completion by early summer.

STAFF. More changes of staff have occurred in the past twelve months. In the summer Miss Ratcliff left to be married, Miss Johnston left teaching for a Chemical Research post, and Mr. Armstrong was appointed lecturer in Mathematics at the Northern Polytechnic. Mr. Armstrong had been a master here for 17 years. He was a first rate scholar and teacher, one of the stars of our operatic society, a singer, an athlete who stimulated interest in the boys' athletics, and he managed the Chess Club. To me, and I know to my predecessor, he was a loyal and helpful colleague. Mr. Armstrong was a man of many talents which were ungrudgingly used in the service of the school. We thank him for his services and wish him well in his new appointment.

At the end of this term we are to lose two mistresses. Miss Carver, the Senior Biology teacher has had a breakdown in health and is advised to seek lighter work. She is one of our able senior teachers, and I regret her premature departure. We wish her a speedy restoration to good health.

Miss Kai, a younger member of the staff, has obtained a post in Bristol her home town where she expects soon to be married. She has been most helpful; particularly with the girls' games and she leaves with our thanks and good wishes.

Newcomers are Mr. Dark, Mr. Roberts, and Miss Green, to whom we wish a happy and fruitful stay with us.

In conclusion I wish to express to the Staff appreciation of another year's loyal co-operation and good work; to the Senior Mistress, Miss Jeans, the Senior Master, Mr. Knowles, for all the service they freely give; to the teaching staff, to the indefatigable secretary, Mrs. Long, to the Caretaker, Cook, and all the other manual and domestic workers.

When frustrations and difficulties which are characteristic of the present day seem to loom large, I have only to remind myself that I am fortunate in my staff, and of course have a fine set of boys and girls in the school, and then I can say with the psalmist "The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground; yea I have a goodly heritage.