

Pen-Pics of Royal Russell Staff at Ballards, 1948-55

Madden FAV – Headmaster. Tall, imposing figure with a significant girth – his self styled nom-de-plume was Tum-Tum! He was highly respected by everyone. He was able to combine discipline, a sense of humour and a good relationship with staff, pupils and parents. On the second visit to the school by the Queen, she is reputed to have got out of her car and said ‘Are you still here?’ He was married, with one daughter, Patricia. He taught Senior Latin and held Current Affairs periods with the 6th Form. Treated the prefects and 6th Form as adults and did not talk down to them.

Crispin-Smith H – Senior Master and Oxford Housemaster. Taught history and was i/c stationery and stores. Was an army Major during the 2nd World War. He was an enthusiastic sportsman, with cricket his special love. He directed 1st XI school cricket until Andrew Foot arrived and took over, continuing with the 2nd XI. The Kent County Cricket team were his passion, as well as Oxford House, to whom he was a great motivator. Could often be seen hitting a 3-iron across Top Pitch! Like Mr Madden, he was able to combine strict discipline with a sense of humour and approachability. His most notorious expression was “I take a dim view of that”, leading to his often being rather unkindly and unjustly referred to as ‘Dim Harry’. Married, with two daughters.

Tomblason C – Cambridge Housemaster. Taught Senior English and Junior Latin. Not an easy man to get on with, and did not suffer fools gladly. Was in charge of Soccer, Swimming and Athletics – although his physique gave no clue of this! Notorious for his PE sessions in Upper Cambridge dormitory at 7.15 a.m.! He also supervised early morning nude swimming at the Pool in the Woods, usually preceded by a PE session. I don’t think this would be allowed these days!! He had a cushion on his ‘visitors’ chair in his office that hissed violently when sat upon! His other talent was for the production of the biennial School play, held in the Autumn term, giving one matinee and two evening performances in front of parents. Confirmed bachelor who retired to Market Rasen in Lincolnshire. He was honoured with an OR Day Memorial Service in the Chapel when he died in the 1980s.

Wright W A – St Andrews Housemaster, known as Lanky to everyone from the Head down for obvious reasons – well over 6ft and as thin as a rake. Reputation for being absent-minded – he once drove into Croydon and came back on the bus, having forgotten he’d gone by car!! Lived in the Cottage in the Woods, with his wife and two children. He held the rank of Captain in the army, and was CO of the School Cadet unit, which was then part of The Queen’s Regiment. His principal subject was Art, which he taught to all classes. When the School Play was Macbeth (Shakespeare), he very skilfully sculptured the head of Francis MacMahon (who played the title role) for the scene depicting the evidence of Macbeth’s death. Lanky sadly died of cancer before reaching retirement age.

Carrick-Smith H – Taught French and occasional RE. Tremendously enthusiastic personality that spilled into the classroom – how could you but enjoy French? Had a long, springy stride. Lived in the cottage next to The Paddock, with his wife and four children. A really kind man, but not one to be taken advantage of. Organised cross-country running.

Payne, Sydney – Musical maestro, having produced opera in many countries. Was a character in every sense of the word, extrovert in dress – bow tie and colourful blazer, a magnificent hooked nose and a very demonstrative teacher. Besides music, he taught several subjects to the 1st form. He gave individual music lessons which had to be paid for separately by parents. Not the greatest of disciplinarians – he tended to invite having the ‘mickey’ taken. He was in his seventies just after the war, and his time at Ballards was cut short by a severe attack of shingles from which he never really recovered, although he did return to duties for a while..

Payne, Kenneth A P – (‘Kapper’) – son of Sydney. Equally eccentric in many ways but less extrovert. Voice somewhat reminiscent of Kenneth Williams. As thin as a rake and generally wore a double breasted suit. Taught mathematics to the Senior School. Also highly musical and he invented ‘Tonescript’, in which the instruments and themes of a musical piece were represented by different shapes and colours. This was once demonstrated on TV. 110% non-sporting and discipline was not his strong point, neither was general communication with pupils. In fact, a boys’ boarding school was not his scene. Left in the early 50s and was replaced by –

Hewitt, Kenneth – (now the Rev. K Hewitt, a regular attendee at O R Days). Taught Senior maths and Physics. His method of teaching was directed at the more able pupils, with those who struggled with applied maths (like me!) finding him difficult to keep up with. Gave up teaching in favour of the church, becoming ordained. The church obviously suited him as it changed him from being a skinny, serious young man into the portly, jovial character he is today.

Mayo, Derek L – Came as a young teacher after Mr Maxwell left around 1949/50. Probably his first teaching post. His subject was geography, a subject that he was able to make pupils enthusiastic over, although he often gave the impression of being a bit nervous. His ‘street cred’ rocketed when he turned up at school with a very attractive fiancée! They eventually married and produced Simon of BBC fame. Left Ballards to come back later as Head of the new Junior School (Hope Morley).

Maxwell, ? – Taught geography and RE in the late 40s. Tall, stocky (rather than plump!), with fair wavy hair. He was not there long enough in my time to remember too much about him.

Campbell, John A C – Taught mathematics to lower classes and the ‘B’ forms in the upper school. Very approachable but not to be taken advantage of. Fanatical cricket lover, and enjoyed playing in friendly matches within the school – his bowling had to be seen to be believed! He was a devastating underarm bowler, a pretty useless bat and to be ‘hidden’ in the field! He was also a cunning table-tennis player, employing the penholder grip. Very few could beat him, but one who would do so regularly was the School Champion at that time, Bill Cave. Was immensely proud of his Ford Prefect, FNN 744, something I’ve never managed to forget! Unmarried, and had a ground floor room in the main dormitory block.

Foot Andrew H – One of the most popular teachers of that era. Came to RRS as a young, newly married man. Taught English and became involved with stage productions. He also took over 1st XI cricket and hockey from Crispin. Very able all-round sportsman. Played hockey for Beckenham, at that stage one of the elite English

clubs. When they beat Oxford University 4-0 the Head read The Times report at an Assembly. He played cricket for Addington when his 1st XI duties permitted. After retirement, Martin Clunes (an OR) told Parkinson that ‘Mr Foot’ had been his mentor!

Flett, George R – Diminutive and much loved science teacher. One of the kindest men one could wish to meet. A Scot, dapper and married with two daughters, he lived in Croydon. Too nice a man to want to take advantage of, he was non-sporting but undertook all his responsibilities with enthusiasm. In my time, he was inclined to invite the 6th form science class to his home for a meal and to watch TV – then a rare treat – usually football, Wolves v some East European team!

Weekes, Jack – The school groundsman! Very well-liked and respected. He was also a very good cricketer, turning out in staff matches at both cricket and hockey. Always found tinkering around on the sports pitches, which he kept in immaculate condition.

Crookes, Norman – General handyman, jack-of-all trades. If something was not working – call Norman, as he was known to everyone! He lived in a cottage attached to the then woodwork room on the school side of Top Pitch. Very affable and always willing to stop and talk to us. He had a shock of dark hair, latterly streaked with grey, which was swept back over his head without a parting.

Claisse, Henry – Roly-poly bachelor, believed to have French ancestors. Taught Junior French and Maths. Gave no impression of enjoying teaching, appearing to do everything under sufferance. His favourite expression was “Don’t bother me now, boy”! When trying to attract our attention he would shout “You, boy, come here!” However, he was a cricketer of exceptional quality, a free-scoring batsman and a very skilful spin bowler – when he could be bothered/persuaded to play! He also had an exceptionally safe pair of hands, provided he did not have to move for the ball!! When there was a school match being played, he could be found lying like a beached whale, in the far corner of Top Pitch, watching avidly. He had a first floor room in the old St Andrews mansion, the only member of staff who resided there.

Hamer, G – Eccentric science teacher prior to George Flett. Eccentric in appearance and manner! He had a shock of dark hair such as an electrocuted cartoon character is depicted as having! His teaching methods were equally bizarre. He left after my first year! One class was spent measuring the thickness of each boy’s hair with a micrometer!

Pizey A A - Taught senior maths prior to Ken Hewitt. Was nearing retirement in my early days. Shortish, stocky figure with still largely dark hair, he was renowned for his husky, booming voice, which tended to linger over certain vowels, especially ‘oo’, as in ‘booooooze’, and ‘a’ as in ‘Daaaaaadson’! One of the few car drivers among staff immediately post-war. One expression he was notorious for was, in the classroom, when he would say “Now watch the blackboard while I run through it”! (when explaining a mathematical problem)

Squires, ‘Squibbles’ & Johnson, ? – Taught PE and Boxing respectively, the former every Friday, the latter alternate Fridays. Squires was a retired circus clown, in his 70s, but still able to show more agility at acrobatics than any of us! He was short, stocky, bouncy and bald. We all loved him! He also choreographed the PE displays

on the Front Lawn which were put on from time to time for distinguished visitors and parents.

Johnson was an equally elderly, beat-up ex-pugilist whose stock phrase was “Keep a straight left!” 99% of us hated boxing and dreaded the time of the annual Inter-House Boxing Tournament when Johnson selected who would box and against whom – no argument!

Greenaway, Rev F W - Vicar of Addington and School Chaplain. A very portly, jovial gentleman. With his bald head, he almost epitomised Friar Tuck! He conducted the school’s Sunday worship diligently and with dedication. He also led the annual confirmation classes for 13 year-olds, as well as an early morning mid-week Holy Communion service once a month.

Bardsley, Rt Rev Cuthbert, Suffragan Bishop of Croydon – he took a great interest in the school, visiting it several times a year, once to confirm a group of boys and several times just to preach. He took great pleasure in just talking to the boys. He later became the highly respected Bishop of Coventry.

Jenkins, Primrose (Miss) – Matron, known as ‘Mattos’, for whatever reason. A massive person, portly, broad shouldered and with no visible neck! Had been at the school for over 20 years but left in the fifties under a cloud – the word ‘embezzlement’ has been mentioned! She was a formidable figure who ruled the dining room, kitchen, domestic departments and clinic with a rod of iron. No parcels from home were allowed to be received without their being opened and vetted in her presence. Anything she did not approve of was confiscated and never seen again!

Brown, ? (‘Cluny’) (Miss) –Assistant Matron to ‘Mattos’, whom she followed around like a (very meek) shadow. Physically, the two were the original ‘Little and Large’ characters. Appeared to have very little powers of decision, being very much the mouthpiece of her superior!