Margaret Dora Higginson
1918-2009

Shared Memories

Part 4

"And Crispin Crispin shall ne'er go by
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;"

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Biography

One of the initiatives which came to fruition in the new era was the dream shared by Margaret and David Baggley of the Boys' Division of finding a venue in the country where both boys and girls could spend time away from school, learning, talking, walking, relaxing and generally exploring a different way of broadening their experiences.

David Baggley, being a former Navy man, had the idea of finding a suitable barge, as a centre, but Margaret (unsurprisingly!) favoured a disused railway station. In the event the perfect place was found – a somewhat dilapidated vicarage at Cautley, near Sedbergh, which proved to be just right for the purpose. Much needed to be done and Margaret paid tribute to the work by parents, staff and other friends to make the house habitable and ready to receive groups of young people. She was especially grateful to Mary and Gordon Hesketh who put in many hours of work at Cautley, sacrificing countless weekends to DIY jobs in the house and putting the garden to rights. None of this would have been done had it not been for the vision and ideals of the two Heads and many others, equally committed. Margaret said they were " extraordinarily lucky" to have found St. Mark's Vicarage and to have been so free and untrammelled in their projects. They led their students up Great Dummacks and to Cautley Spout, trusting that all would be well, and it always was. (Health and Safety? Not in those days!) The students responded sensibly and the Great Dummacks experience became a tradition.

So extra dimensions were added to the life of Bolton School. Girls and boys, of course) were able to experience a little of life outside Bolton through time spent at Cautley, taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, walking the Pennine Way, and of course, most significantly, applying to be accepted for VSO work, long, long before it became almost a career option. The emphasis was, as always, on giving back to society what one had been given during one's education, and there are of course countless Old Girls who will testify to Margaret's lasting influence on their lives. Her time at Bolton School was marked by an opening-up into the community and the world at large, and many former students attribute their social conscience to the 'Charities' period at the end of Thursday afternoons, when visits were made to residential homes for the elderly and for children in care. These Old Girls would maintain that the benefit was mutual, and although academic achievement was given its due acknowledgement, other qualities were always stressed and appreciated. There was a strong ethos of service which Margaret maintained and developed further and this has been a lasting legacy.

The Cautley Connection 1967-1989

Margaret Higginson, David Baggley and Tom Markland, the generous benefactor of St. Mark's Vicarage at Cautley, had a vision for the place as a centre for outdoor pursuits but it soon became far more than that. Through the generosity of spirit, communal drive and enthusiasm of teachers, parents and students that vision was realised. Going to Cautley, a solid stone building near Sedbergh, brought Staff and students together on neutral ground in a relaxed fashion. Friendships were bonded, co-operation flourished, opportunities to develop hidden qualities, character and compassion were encouraged. Everyone returned refreshed in spirit and more aware of what really mattered.

Cautley provided physical challenges aplenty as mountains were climbed, raging torrents crossed, deep snowdrifts negotiated. Human challenges too — patient, exhausted staff grappling with the temperamental Rayburn and managing to turn our nourishing meals for 40 or more hungry mouths. This was after a night dealing with excited children intent on all kinds of midnight mischief, following a day of hard work and exploration in all weathers. And yet everyone was cheerful and ready for the next day's adventures.

Margaret wrote "Cautley showed them a green world that will outlast the machine-made environment in which most of their lives will be lived. And if it taught them that the best things in life are truly free and that there is no pleasure quite so satisfying as the sense of having tested yourself to the utmost in the free open air and coming home to the company of friends".

Margaret wrote that Cautley was" a happy house" and it rang with laughter. It was "not only a building but an idea and an experience" adding "a different dimension to life". It engendered an enduring love of the hills and respect for the countryside and above all an enjoyment of the simpler things in life. Margaret's maxim, on the wall of the common room for all to see came from Gerard Manley Hopkins — "Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet". How fortunate we were to have the opportunity to engage with Nature at Cautley.
The Cautley spirit and Margaret's vision live on in those of us whose lives were enriched by the experiences shared there

Pam Adams
Geography teacher and Head of Department 1962–1973

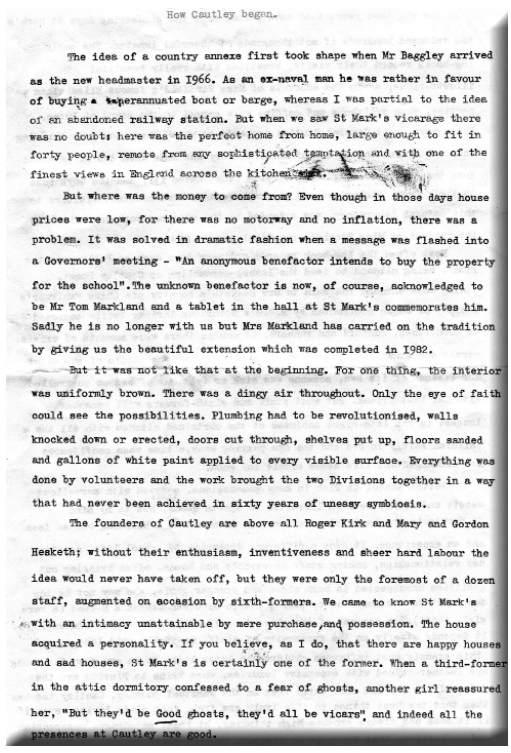
How Cautley began.

The idea of a country annexe first took shape when Mr Baggley arrived as the new headmaster in 1966. As an ex-naval man he was rather in favour of buying a superannuated boat or barge, whereas I was partial to the idea of an abandoned railway station. But when we saw St. Mark's vicarage there was no doubt: here was the perfect home from home, large enough to fit in forty people, remote from any sophisticated temptation and with one of the finest views in England across the kitchen sink.

But where was the money to come from? Even though in those days house prices were low, for there was no motorway and no inflation, there was a problem. It was solved in dramatic fashion when a message was flashed into a Governors' meeting – " An anonymous benefactor intends to buy the property for the school". The unknown benefactor is now, of course, acknowledged to be Mr Tom Markland and a tablet in the hall at St. Mark's commemorates him. Sadly he is no longer with us but Mrs Markland has carried on the tradition by giving us the beautiful extension which was completed in 1982.

But it was not like that at the beginning. For one thing, the interior was uniformly brown. There was a dingy air throughout. Only the eye of faith could see the possibilities. Plumbing had to be revolutionised, walls knocked down or erected, doors cut through, shelves put up, floors sanded and gallons of white paint applied to every visible surface. Everything was done by volunteers and the work brought the two Divisions together in a way that had never been achieved in sixty years of uneasy symbiosis.

The founders of Cautley are above all Roger Kirk and Mary and Gordon Hesketh; without their enthusiasm, inventiveness and sheer hard labour the idea would never have taken off, but they were only the foremost of a dozen staff, augmented on occasion by sixth-formers. We came to know St. Mark's with an intimacy unattainable by mere purchase and possession. The house acquired a personality. If you believe, as I do, that there are happy houses and sad houses, St. Mark's is certainly one of the former. When a third-former in the attic dormitory confessed to a fear of ghosts, another girl reassured her, "But they'd be good ghosts, they'd all be vicars", and indeed all the presences at Cautley are good.



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Margaret's 'adopted' daughter, Glenys Carter and her family also spent many happy times at Cautley, and Margaret had memories of pushing Glenys' youngest daughter, Diana, over the fields in her buggy. Margaret felt that Cautley was democratic and cheap – she recalled the cost as 1/6d a night! The staff did the cooking and everyone joined in the cleaning, and the whole operation was self-running. This was almost self-sufficiency before the word had been invented. There were also occasions when children from Bolton who wouldn't otherwise have had a holiday were invited to spend time at Cautley, when Mary Hesketh and Margaret Long gave stalwart support. Pam Adams, who was a member of the original party charged with finding a suitable place to start the venture took many parties to Cautley and contributed immensely to the popularity and success of the Cautley venture.

St. Mark's Cautley

The subject of St. Mark's, Cautley and its future began openly to generate debate during 1988/1989. It was a sensitive issue, a cause championed tirelessly by Margaret, who, although no longer directly involved, was, nevertheless, concerned that something should be done to forestall the sale of the property.

There is evidence in the articles and correspondence extant from the inception of Cautley that so many derived benefit from the Cautley experience.The former vicarage was gifted to the schools by Mr Tom Markland and then added to by an extension again generously given by Mrs Markland and completed in 1982.

A key factor in the development of St. Mark's, Cautley was the coming together of the Divisions - in Margaret's words:

" in a way that had never been achieved in sixty years of uneasy symbiosis".

Roger Kirk, Mary and Gordon Hesketh were prime movers. There were staff, Sixth Formers and old pupils whose names were recorded in the log book along with the many activities in which visitors participated.

Margaret writes:
The essence of the place is self-help, self-entertainment…."

Throughout its active history and then as it became threatened with closure, even at the point when St. Mark's would no longer be a reality for Bolton School, Margaret championed its cause. She entered into correspondence with those whose interest she felt should be engaged. She wrote to anyone she though might need to be aware of what she believed was the urgency of saving the country house and what it represented.

Evidence demonstrates that Margaret had kindred spirits who opposed the demise of Cautley.

"I was horrified to hear about Cautley…"

Margaret's clear wish was that Cautley and, therefore, the spirit behind it, should not be allowed to die. Thoughts from parents opposed to the sale of Cautley are given expression. References are made to " the subtle blend of learning, fun, self-discipline and motivation" and to "warm companionship"…

Reactions from former pupils covered responses such as: "heart-breaking"… "devastating"… " astonishing and appalling news"…"oh what a shame to sell St. Mark's, Cautley!"

Someone wrote in May, 1989:

"much of our lives is tied up in the nails and in the spirit of that place…" It is apparent from the letters and documents that the thought of losing what so many considered an asset was proving to be a considerable wrench.
However, another letter to Margaret, written earlier in the year, in January, reveals:
"The decision to sell St. Mark's is far more a reflection of the problem increasingly experienced with the building in its physical situation than of any move away from many of the principles which lay behind the original choice and gift of St. Mark's."

Patterdale and after

The genesis of the Cautley project may have been a reading-party in autumn 1955 when Margaret took a small group of girls to Patterdale on the wilder shores of Ullswater, to read Wordsworth in the settings that inspired his poems. I remember that Dorothy Wordsworth's role was also given its due, unusual in those days; another indication of Margaret's scholarship. Judith Todd, Beatrice Hamer, Joan Parry, Pleasance Page, Jean Haslam, Barbara Kitchen and Elaine Kelsey all piled into a small guest-house (we were a substantial lot in those days, as the photograph reveals).

Margaret organised a visit to her former tutor and Principal of Somerville College, Miss Helen Darbishire, then regarded as the greatest living Wordsworth scholar, who had appropriately retired to Grasmere where she lived with her close friend Vera Farnell. It was a hot day, and they received us kindly with large slices of cool melon, greatly appreciated after scrambling up the stony path to their small cottage.

Margaret regarded the project as an initiation rather than a holiday, and in order to savour the full flavour of the Wordsworth Experience, we did it the authentic way. She pointed out that the roundabout bus journey from Patterdale to Grasmere would take longer than a brisk walk over the fells. Setting out armed with gabardines and sandwiches, she led us up the valley past Brothers Water and out on to Striding Edge. Luckily it was a clear still day and it was only the odd pebble that we dislodged that went bouncing down the near-vertical slopes on either side.

Miss Darbishire informed us that this was the route Wordsworth himself favoured for going to post his letters, except that he usually went by starlight. When invited to read a poem for us, she chose the beautiful tragic "The Affliction of Margaret", perhaps not the most appropriate title in the circumstances, but deeply moving nevertheless.

Margaret was the first headmistress to make any real progress on joint activities between the two Divisions. Again, she was ahead of her time. When a joint trip to Italy was mooted, the details had to be kept under wraps until the announcement was made simultaneously in both Divisions, lest anyone should wish to participate "for the wrong reasons", whatever those might be.

The general attitude in those days was that young people should wait till they left school before finding out about the opposite sex, and some girls who would like to have taken part were unable to overcome the parental veto on anything that involved “Boys.” But times change, and what a good thing. EL

The countryside meant a great deal to Margaret and she was thrilled to be part-owner of Ivy Cottage in Muker, Swaledale. Many happy holidays were spent there, together with Basil, Ceridwen and their family. The instigator as it were, of the Muker connection, was Mark Gibbs, a friend of the family and Head of RE. at what was then Audenshaw Grammar School. Mark was a great supporter of the Kirchentag which met each year in Germany and part of the movement in the Sixties which attempted to blow fresh breath into the life of the church. Margaret also played her part in this revitalising approach, but more of that in another issue.

Margaret spoke with relish of the Higginson family holidays in Ireland, of a “cheap price” cruise in the Mediterranean on a ”leaky Greek ship” and of happy holidays with Ceridwen and Basil in France and Geneva. She recalled how Basil had led a party to Oberammergau (1960?), enabling those who had never travelled beyond Manchester to venture further afield. She described Basil as an inspiring and enthusiastic parson, who was “full of life and action” and who stayed far longer in post in inner-city Manchester than many others. He was also closely connected to the Samaritan organisation and indeed became the national General Secretary. Ceridwen, meanwhile had taken a teaching post at Whalley Range School.

Ever one to applaud plain living and self-sufficiency Margaret became very moved by the story of Hannah Hauxwell, the ‘Daughter of the Dales.’ She became a good and generous friend to Hannah, who responded with gratitude.

Seasons of her Life

a further, perhaps rather unlikely, chapter in the varied and interesting career of Margaret Higginson.

An aspect of Margaret's personality deriving from her lifelong observation of and involvement with people was a recurring tendency to bring together individuals she herself knew, but who were unknown to one another. A resolve to yoke those whom she deemed in need of a life partner with others who might be eligible was evident, at various stages, to numbers of Old Girls and young men who were handsome, academic, requiring mothering or, in Margaret's opinion, of being taken under an able female wing.

The subject of this section of the remarkable record of Margaret's life is an unlikely one. She is Hannah Hauxwell, the solitary daleswoman about whom Margaret heard and subsequently befriended. Although so very different, the two indomitable women have in common a strength of character and a degree of determination that carried them through independent, distinctive careers.

Margaret's professional walk was one surrounded daily by hundreds of people. She addressed large gatherings of people - younger as well as older audiences who were not always in educational venues - and she wrote extensively for the local press and for national publications.

Hannah Hauxwell lived an entirely isolated existence until she had fame thrust upon her as a result of a television documentary filmed in Yorkshire:'Too Long a Winter'. Her life up to that point is recorded in written form with Barry Cockroft, also the presenter of the programme.

The book, 'Seasons of my Life', The Story of a Solitary Dales Woman, contained additional memorabilia from Margaret's collection in the form of extra photographs and letters. Pictures such as the one of Margaret with Old Girls outside Hannah's home, a photograph of Hannah linking arms with 'my friend, Miss Higginson' in London (perhaps after the Buckingham Palace garden party to which Hannah was invited, since she is wearing a most impressive hat!), a postcard from Naples and letters from Hannah to Margaret provide revelations not only about the modest Yorkshire woman whom the nation took to its heart but also about Margaret.

With characteristic understanding and so many acts of kindness, Margaret wrote, sent visitors in the form of girls who were walking the Pennine Way (‘ I don’t know how they did it. They were all nice people’) as visitors for the daleswoman. She maintained what at first seemed to be quite an unlikely and unusual friendship. It was Margaret who was responsible for giving a bicycle to Hannah, evidently in addition to an electric fire (‘still a good friend and in regular use’) and particular Christmas gifts. In her bold, round hand, Hannah repeatedly acknowledges Margaret’s generosity. The ‘little jacket will be very useful’...

So, the two women were poles apart - even the distinctive, clear, legible handwriting fronting the envelopes from Baldersdale was so different from Margaret’s own.

Margaret followed through the friendship that she had initiated. She stirred others to becomeinvolved. Mrs. Mary Hesketh and, undoubtedly, her husband, Gordon, appear to have drivenMargaret to visit Hannah between other visits from Bolton School girls and Old Girls.

There were letters, generous gifts and various communications to demonstrate the faithfulness of a kind interestin someone Margaret had ‘met’ initially through the medium of television.

Members of the general public sent gifts and donations as they reached out in hitherto unprecedented ways. It is questionable, however, as to whether anyone else actually kept up such a consistent degree of contact and concern in the way that Margaret did. The fact that Hannah wrote in such fond terms to record her gratitude and to express her friendship would, surely, indicate how aware she was of Margaret’s tendency to reach out to people when she perceived a need. Margaret did not allow obstacles to stand in her way - but then, neither did Hannah, as she battled with adverse Yorkshire dales weather and stubborn farm animals. JH

HANNAH HAUXWELL

All who knew Margaret Higginson will have very different recollections of her: she was such a unique, multi-faceted character. One thing, however, I feel we may share in our memories is her skill in creating, nurturing and sustaining a very wide network of friends, who were such fascinating people.

She kept in touch loyally with so many from a variety of circles: her close family and friends, old girls, professional colleagues, political contacts, the Bolton School community – to name but a few. A unique friend was Hannah Hauxwell who was brought to a wider audience as a result of the late Barry Cockcroft's television programme 'Too Long A Winter' which touched and gripped much of the nation. Hannah lived on a remote farm: she was a modest recluse brought into the limelight by television. She lived a solitary farming life on the Pennine Way. In 1973 this unique lady, pulling her white cow behind her, entered our thinking.

Margaret became fascinated by Hannah – in many ways it appeared that she envied Hannah her country existence, uncluttered by commercialism, materialism and urban life. Margaret remained in touch with Hannah and this became an enduring friendship. Whilst Hannah and Margaret were in many ways 'poles apart' their relationship was uncannily close.

At Bolton School the staff and pupils were made aware of Hannah's amazing lifestyle. Girls were encouraged by Margaret Higginson to take up the challenge of walking the Pennine Way and were 'instructed' to visit Hannah at Low Birk Hatt Farm. Margaret had a country cottage in Muker and whenever staff were invited to visit her there, she would engineer a visit to Hannah. That is how I was privileged to meet Hannah on at least two occasions and these visits were always unforgettable. Having toiled across the fields in our wellingtons, Hannah gave Margaret and her retinue a most sincere welcome. It was always fascinating to listen to Hannah's and Margaret's dialogue. Hannah expressed herself beautifully and thoughtfully – in the MDH style – as they shared common interests and thoughts. On one visit the USA presidential election was close: Hannah and Margaret debated the issues fervently. They also enjoyed a shared love of poetry, the beauty of nature and a love of the countryside. Some of my abiding memories are her warm welcome, her beautiful smile, her enviable complexion, the table in the front room piled high with gifts from her admiring public and the wonderful views surrounding the farm.

Low Birk Hatt
Baldersdale
Cotherstone
Bd Castle
Sat July 10th 1971

P.S. Little basket will be very useful. Thank you.

Dear Miss Higginson

Thank you very much (at present) for the lovely bicycle which arrived on Monday (what a wonderful machine and in beautiful condition. Also thank you for the box of sweets on Tuesday and the visitors!

The other bicycle I had was very nice and I liked it, but this is a fortune from it all the same such a difference. Thank you also for the thing to go with it, lights, pump, oil, and something to mend punctures how very thoughtful of you.

I have been thinking how very much I owe to your great kindness who was only a stranger to you, the sweets, the wireless and now this lovely bicycle, none of which I would have had

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who brought both articles, they were all nice people It was a very hot day on Tuesday for the young ladies who were walking the Pennine way I don't know how they did it. They were all nice people.

I am so thrilled about the bicycle, I think I will manage to ride it I had a try on Monday night after the young people left, I didn't get on very well at first but later improved.

4.

wait for you. All these things are here and now which is so important. Thank you once again. I do hope you are well. My regards to Mr & Mrs Hesketh. Must close postman waiting.

My very best wishes & hopes to see you when you can that is hope you aren't too tired after your week at Sedbergh.

In haste Yours Sincerely
Hannah Hauxwell

Hannah is a totally unspoilt, modest, humble person with whom MDH related so easily and happily. As Margaret always did, Hannah retains her retiring, unassuming ways and never seeks the limelight. Her sincere approach to life, her humility, her ability to relate to people were admired by MDH. Whilst the two were very different, they shared many similarities and were characters who will never be forgotten by those fortunate enough to have known them. Fred Dibnah was a Bolton legend; Hannah Hauxwell is a North Yorkshire legend. Neither Hannah nor Margaret will ever be eclipsed from my memory. Such unique characters are sadly now in a minority. Long live memories of Margaret Higginson and her friend, Hannah Hauxwell.

Julien Harvatt

(Staff, 1970 – 1977)

MDH4- 4 pieces of journalism on the issues raised by co-education

Margaret may have believed in closer co-operation between the two Divisions, as proved by her enthusiasm for the Cautley project, but she had some reservations about the long-term effect of co-education on the achievements of girls. She was not alone in suggesting that co-education, the buzz-word of that hopeful decade 60-70, was good for boys, but less so for girls, and in three articles from this time, she assembles the evidence.

Writing for the Manchester Guardian of 18.3.68 before it slunk off to the fleshpots of the south and lost its name and proud independence, her heading was “If we really want more women scientists, we ought to reverse the present trend towards co-education.”

No punches pulled here in the wake of the Dainton Committee, whose six members (“all men”, she noted), wanted to increase the numbers of both sexes taking courses in science and technology. They recommended that all pupils should study maths until they left school, with Sixth Form courses combining Arts and Science subjects.

Margaret knew these ideas were not just uncongenial, but impossible to implement at the time, for lack of suitably qualified teachers. Being MDH, she initiates a debate about why science is less attractive to girls. Is it in the chromosomes and apparent in childhood? “Left to themselves, boys draw aeroplanes and cars, girls draw people and houses.”
She accepts “this characteristic sex difference” but marshals formidable evidence that it is reinforced by co-education.

THE GUARDIAN Monday March 18 1968 7

MARGARET HIGGINSON

headmistress of Bolton School (Girls' Division)

'If we really want more women scientists we ought to reverse the present trend towards coeducation'

WHY is it that, in general, women appear to be less inclined to mathematical and scientific inquiry than men? Is it simply social conditioning and the fear of appearing to excel in nakedly intellectual studies? (Is it somehow more decent to be good at subjects descended from the old respectable accomplishments, such as French and Art?) Or is there a real incapacity?

These questions must surely occur to anyone studying the report of the Dainton Committee (whose six members, incidentally, are all men) "on the flow of candidates in science and technology into higher education." It aims to reverse the present tendency for sixth-formers to prefer Arts or Social Sciences, an imbalance which, while growing alarmingly even among boys, is plainly much greater among girls. Yet here should exist, or so it is frequently asserted, the last great untapped reservoir of scientific talent.

The Dainton Committee recommends that "all pupils should normally study mathematics until they leave school; sixth form courses should consist of mathematics in conjunction with three or four main subjects balanced between Arts and Sciences." If this were really to apply to all pupils (not just potential university entrants) its implementation would immediately halve the number of girls staying on into the sixth at all, and furthermore greatly diminish the fearsome competition for places at university, where even now women occupy only three places out of ten.

Why would many girls simply not compete on these terms? Attitudes might be somewhat modified by new syllabuses and methods, but there is a characteristic sex difference here, perceptible even in the infant school. Many little boys lisp in numbers, not so many little girls. Left to themselves, boys draw airplanes and cars, girls draw people and houses. Right from the start they seek the human and personal. And why not? Must we all submit to the new orthodoxy which says that a knowledge of calculus is necessary to salvation? A claim at least as doubtful as those once made for Latin.

The cleverest

The very cleverest of either sex can, of course, do all things well, and there may be some consolation in the fact that in many girls' schools the

On a less conjectural level, there is no doubt at all that the Dainton recommendation could not at this moment be implemented in girls' schools for want of qualified teachers. To think otherwise is to be totally unrealistic.

The usual answer at this point is, "But things will change when we have universal coeducation. Then at last we shall mobilise the latent mathematical and scientific ability of girls." Sir Edward Boyle, for instance, has been known to make such a prophecy. But such evidence as we have, runs contrary to this optimistic view.

The statistics in the Dainton Report unfortunately do not distinguish between girls in girls' schools and girls in mixed schools, but figures recently given by Mrs Shirley Williams to an audience of North-west headmasters and headmistresses indicate that almost twice as many girls from single-sex schools as from mixed schools, in proportion to the total number of girls in each type, go on to read Mathematics or Science at university. Moreover, the lists of entrants to Oxbridge reveal an overwhelming preponderance of girls schools at this highest level of scientific achievement. The point is ruefully ceded by the Coeducational Schools Committee of the Headmasters' Association. They speak (HMA Review, July, 1967) of "the evident fact that in coed schools girls tend strongly to specialise on the arts side while boys dominate that of science. It is disconcerting to a coed headmaster," they add, "that this marked preference on the part of girls is notably less apparent in all-girls' schools."

To be logical

So, to be perfectly logical, on the basis of the available evidence one would have to say that if we really want more women scientists we ought to reverse the present trend towards coeducation.

Why should this be? On the one hand because girls feel instinctively that success in hard intellectual competition will not endear them to boys, and on the other because so much of the mathematics and science teaching now being given in girls' schools is so good. (Some of it is being given by men, and this reinforcement is appreciated.) Few and dwindling as they are, the women teachers we have are often superlatively thorough and conscientious, with an eye to the

Even the Co-educational Schools Committee of the Headmasters' Association has to admit this, while plaintively lamenting that "this marked preference on the part of girls is notably less apparent in all-girls' schools." The facts speak for themselves; "twice as many girls from single-sex schools as from mixed schools….go on to read Maths or Science at university."

Why? Partly emotional : "Girls feel instinctively that success in hard intellectual competition will not endear them to boys ", but only partly. The real problem lies in the lower status of women teachers of science in mixed schools. "So long as the headships of these departments.. continue to go almost automatically to men…the most capable women teachers will prefer posts in girls' schools", and in Margaret's eyes, the girls in co-educational schools are the losers. EL.

Two years later, in a TES article 1.5.70 entitled "Co-education but not unisex", she accepts the trend, with a good grace born of her own sustained and varied teaching experience. "One has to recognize a running tide which, if it can lift a Cambridge college off the rocks of tradition, is not likely to be withstood by local education authorities." (Thirty years later, she had mixed feelings about her own college, Somerville, finally admitting men, though her prophecy that it would have a male Principal in her lifetime has still not been fulfilled.)

She analyses the different qualities of boys' and girls' schools before turning to the mixed school. At their best "They are open, easy-going friendly places with a "family" atmosphere." But there are drawbacks, especially for girls, who "all too soon, about 16 anyway, realize that they will be better-liked if they let the boys do the talking."

She returns to the same lack of suitable role-models noted in the previous article; even as she wrote, schools were being amalgamated with results that were most unfair to women teachers. Many headships of mixed schools were advertised as only open to men. (Laws against discrimination on grounds of sex have since been passed, but have they been implemented?)

This was in the troubled era after the disturbances of1968 which led to "the present worldwide revolt against authority." Margaret saw parallels with the situation that obtained all too often in such male-dominated schools; she ends by suggesting that it is time for "a new concept of authority exercized through gentleness", which might be more acceptable in schools and on the world stage itself. Perhaps schools are still in want of that "balanced harmony between the patient creativity of women and the logic and energy of men" that she recommended.EL

Co-education but not unisex

by Margaret Higginson

I happen to have had the good fortune to experience some variety in secondary education. I have taught in two girls' schools (one boarding) and in one grammar school for boys for three years. ("Miss, you're lucky—we used to throw darts at Mr. Smith!") I have also had two terms in very different co-educational schools—one a grammar school in industrial Yorkshire, the other an evolving comprehensive in East London.

And for 15 years I have been headmistress of a girls' direct grant school cooperating on equal and happy terms with an adjacent boys' school. I have served under three headmasters and three headmistresses and have liked and admired them all for different qualities. I should like to see the virtues of all these various types of schools preserved and synthesized.

Whether or not the comprehensive idea finally prevails universally and children of all abilities are everywhere taught in one institution, it seems to me almost inevitable that ultimately both sexes will generally be educated together.

One has to recognize a running tide which, if it can lift a Cambridge college off the rocks of tradition, is not likely to be withstood by local education authorities. Social, psychological and administrative pressures are all conspiring to one effect.

In this situation it is only too obvious that there may be fears of takeover on either side and such fears may be expressed in defensive smugness, a "we don't do it that way here" attitude which could doom any such enforced cooperation from the start. Magnanimity is needed, and an appreciation of what the other partner has to offer. What positive features then have single-sex schools got to give to a partnership of this kind?

What especially distinguishes the boys' schools? I would put first objective knowledge and intellectual vigour. Anyone who has walked within earshot of 12-year-old boys on the way to school knows that their talk is studded with pellets of information. They pick up facts as magnets do iron filings. They know how things work.

Later on, in their teens, boys tend to have more unconventional ideas and more willingness to express them than girls. They keep their teachers on their toes, which is a good thing. Secondly, when men are whole-hearted teachers they are often very, very good, willing to give much extra time to games, holiday expeditions and the like. Some have a breadth of experience of the world, of action and danger, which inspires confidence and admiration in the young. They are masters of the situation in every sense. Thirdly, boys have an openness and honesty, an informality of approach, which can let the air into a stuffy situation. They are also often very funny, which helps a lot.

What have the girls' schools got to give to the partnership? A concept of education as preparation for living rather than for earning a living, and a sense of integration with the world of people, old and young. Where boys are interested in facts, girls are interested in relationships. They love to be involved in social service. In every subject they ask moral questions.

Girls' schools build on this and encourage growth towards emotional adulthood. (A distinguished venereologist, anxious to lecture in schools, told me how much easier it was to get access to girls' schools than to boys.) A less single-minded academic approach leads also to flexibility—to the general courses for the less clever girls which the Crowther report commended, to emphasis on art and music and religious education, to the abandonment of streaming, form-positions and so forth.

Sensitivity to relationships leads also, in my experience, to a high degree of practical democracy; staff-rooms are less hierarchical than many of their masculine equivalents and most girls' schools that I know have either abolished prefects or choose them by free election. Lastly, girls (and women teachers) are undeniably diligent.

Mixed schools have the great virtue of jollity. They are open, easy-going, friendly places with a "family" atmosphere and they find it easy to organize social events, plays, concerts, dances, &c. There is always someone around who can fix up a stage or make a costume. They are invariably commended for their "naturalness". In them boys and girls (and men and women) see each other, it is said, "as they really are".

This, for the pimply boy and the plump girl in mid-adolescence is not perhaps quite such a great advantage as all that. Self-consciousness can be acute in a mixed school and it can lead to the intellectual eclipse of the girl. All too soon—round about 16 anyway—bright girls realize that they will be better liked if they let the boys do the talking.

Without going to the extreme lengths of the American high school, with its ball-games and drum-majorettes, mixed schools may polarize the sexes, especially at the sixth-form stage, where all too often girls do arts and boys do science. (It is an established fact that girls in girls' schools are twice as likely to specialize in mathematics or science as those in mixed ones.)

Mixed schools also have to deal with the built-in difficulty of the different rates of development of boys and girls and their innately different tastes in reading matter. But all this is only to say (as Plato noted a long while ago) that it is harder to drive two horses than one. What is required is great skill in the charioteer.

If we are to have many more mixed schools, as I believe we are, there must be from the start an atmosphere of free and equal partnership. Boys and girls both need to see adults of their own sex who exemplify maturity and success; if all the leaders are masculine, ambitious girls will tend to identify with men. The coming amalgamations will be failures if they are takeovers by one sex from the other (as would be readily admitted if there were any danger of takeover from the female side).

No doubt some mixed schools do have an ideal balance, yet there are many large mixed schools today where scarcely a head of a major department (barring domestic science) is a woman, and some local authorities pay so little regard to equality of opportunity that they still advertise the headships of mixed schools as open only to men. No one suggests that in practice most such heads are ever likely to be women, though there are convincing examples of success.

It would be ironical, however, if after a century in which women have proved their competence in one of the few fields of activity open to them, their career prospects were now to narrow into a neo-Victorian subordination.

In claiming a share in authority for women I am not suggesting that they should become rivals or imitations of men—rather the reverse. While both sexes are equally capable of doing the same work well, especially when they work in teaching: they, nevertheless, have their distinctive insights and styles, each complementary to the other. Unisex is no solution, either in schools or in society.

Is it unreasonable to suggest that the present world-wide revolt against authority may be partly explicable in terms of a revolt against a masculine concept of authority, as symbolized in institutions which appear to depend ultimately on force? Perhaps what we need now is a new concept of authority exercized through gentleness. Women, who have had small say in the way the world has been run for the past few thousand years, may have something helpful to contribute from their different sense of reality, their acceptance of limitation, their trust in people.

Our society desperately needs an assertion of traditional "feminine" values—compassion, unselfishness, fidelity; the snag is that these virtues are, by definition, unassertive, yet how can they ever be attended to unless they share in the excercise of power? It is necessary that they should be represented among those who make decisions and influence policies. Without these insights, government, whether in the state or in the schools, is lop-sided, impoverished.

It is no more discreditable for a woman to seek power than for a man, provided it is for right purposes. Education needs all the good people it can get. It needs pure intellect, to which sex is an irrelevance, but even more it needs personal qualities ranging through the whole human spectrum.

If we are to educate boys and girls together the educators themselves must exemplify a balanced harmony between the patient creativity of women and the logic and energy of men. If we could in fact achieve this, then the whole might be more than the sum of the parts.

Miss Higginson is headmistress of Bolton School, Lancashire.

Two pieces written for the ISIS Newsletter in 1980 are in a lighter vein, but underpinned by the same principles.

"Modern Diana" asks whether girls in mixed schools really are regarded as "academically the equal of boys." Has the historic flowering of female talent in the great girls' public schools of the late 19th C. extended into the 20th? She concludes that it has, but sadly, only within its original channels. Only in a girls' school, do they get to play Mark Antony as well as Ophelia.

The rise of feminism has not made much difference; this was the era of clever reworking of traditional tales. "One does not need to go to the extreme of re-writing "Snow White" so that the heroine departs for the office each day on her motor-bike leaving the dwarves to do the washing, scrubbing and baking, to see that there is good reason to assign a more active and decisive role in life to the girl than she usually fills in "Janet and John."

Haunted by the image of the drum-majorettes and the baseball team, Margaret recognises the old enemy of promise for girls: the male-dominated power-structure so entrenched in mixed schools. “Very seldom is there anything like an equal balance of the sexes at the top of the hierarchy; the consequence is that girls- and even more importantly, boys- grow up assuming that it is the inalienable role of the man to dominate and decide.”

However, the flag of freedom for girls still flies where it was first raised. “If you want your daughter to cross the Atlantic in an open boat or lead a research team at a nuclear power station or become Secretary of State for Education in a Labour Government or be the first woman on an oil-rig, write excessively intellectual novels like Iris Murdoch or even become a Pat Arrowsmith and chain herself to every railing within sight, you should send her to a girls’ public school.”

Recognising as she always did that not all girls want such exciting lives, she concludes: “ this is the risk you run, because such schools do indeed encourage originality and independence. Their pupils don’t actually have to do anything exceptional. They are simply made aware of the infinite possibilities of life.”

MODERN DIANA–releasing Centuries of (pent-up) energy

by Margaret Higginson

“No holds were barred. The sky was, and still is the limit.”

“Diana is a modern, emancipated, liberal-minded woman – it pains me to say that about anyone.” Such are the views of Potter (late Pottermint, retired), a man who, one supposes, may be counted on as a fairly strong supporter of the Public Schools. He probably subscribes to ISIS. He may even have a nodding acquaintance with my admired friend and Governor, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, who, in the course of a brilliant article in the March issue of ISIS Newsletter, thundered against the kind of picture book in which “Jack must not be depicted with a football or in trousers or Jill with her dolly and in a frock.”

Now to denounce the wilful contravention of accepted social norms is one thing, and self-evident to common-sense, but it is quite another thing to recommend that Jack should never be presented pushing the pram nor Jill shown in dungarees helping to mend the car. One does not need to go to the extreme of re-writing “Snow White” so that the heroine departs for the office each day on her motor-bike leaving the Dwarves to the washing, scrubbing and baking to see that there is good reason to assign a more active and decisive role in life to the girl than she usually fills in “Janet and John.”

It might be thought that the public schools, as Miss Pinkerton’s successors and the last citadels of tradition, would be places where girls would be brought up to accept a merely conventional social role. After all, in the authoritative and presumably aristocratic opinion of Barbara Cartland, “Pretty girls should not be educated; they’ll get married. It’s all right for the plain ones to be intelligent.” One would be inclined to look for the ‘progressive’ product in the state system and especially in the co-educational schools. This is hardly the case, however. The circumstances of the founding of the girls’ public schools in the late nineteenth century led them into direct emulation if not competition with the boys’ schools and they adopted, often too uncritically, the standards and ambitions of their masculine contemporaries. They had their blazers, their slang, their School Songs. One has only to look at Celia Haddon’s delightful compilation, *“Great Days and Jolly Days”* (Hodder and Stoughton) to see how thoroughly they absorbed their lesson. Miss Beale of Cheltenham, it is true, deplored competitive games and is said to have become agitated on viewing a hockey match. “The girls have only one ball between them” she exclaimed, “Fetch a ball for each of them immediately!” But she was the exception and the competitive ethos of Miss Buss at the North London Collegiate School prevailed. Taught by women who were clever, authoritative and successful, girls in girls’ schools became ambitious and confident. The pent-up energy of centuries was released, they became almost a new species. They filled all the roles in their new community – the thinker, the leader, the organiser, sometimes (regrettably) the hearty. They played Mark Antony as well as Ophelia. No holds were barred. The sky was, and still is the limit.

I came across a curiously wry tribute to this aspect of the girls’ public schools in a recent publication of a decidedly feminist women’s group. The general tenor of its contents was very much against what were seen as the conventional attitudes of the public schools, the way in which they ‘conditioned’ their members into acceptance of ‘normal’ standards and goals. Yet even these critics had to confess that they had derived from those schools and those teachers “The idea of women having a career, which was something absolutely fundamental to the ethos of the school . . . the idea that women are scientists . . . that girls were academically the equal of boys. That was taken for granted.” It is by no means taken for granted even today in many mixed schools in the maintained system. Propinquity does not guarantee equality and too often the sexes are polarised into distinct and complementary roles, with arts for the girls and science for the boys. We have not yet arrived at the transatlantic relationship of the drum-majorettes to the baseball team, but it is not so far away. This tendency is powerfully reinforced by the usual authority structure in such schools. Very seldom is there anything like an equal balance of the sexes at the top of the hierarchy; the consequence is that girls – and even more importantly boys – grow up assuming that it is the inalienable role of the man to dominate and decide. But in the girls’ schools women have for a century had their chance to show what they can do as leaders and the results have been felt throughout society.

If you want your daughter to cross the Atlantic in an open boat or lead a research team at a nuclear power station or become Secretary of State for Education in a Labour Government or be the first woman on an oil-rig, write excessively intellectual novels like Iris Murdoch or even become a Pat Arrowsmith and chain herself to every railing within sight, you should send her to a girls’ public school. Perhaps you don’t want her to become any of these things? Well, this is the risk you run, because such schools do indeed encourage originality and independence. Their pupils don’t actually *have* to do anything exceptional. They are simply made aware of the infinite possibilities of life.

They are also made aware, as in any good school, but perhaps more insistently, of the obligations of freedom. There still survives in girls’ schools a faint sense of astonishment and gratitude at the opening up of all the opportunities so long denied to women. It is fading, no doubt, as all luck gradually comes to be taken for granted, but it is still there as a residual blessing. Girls – some girls anyway – still think with Mary Wolstonecroft that “by reforming themselves they can reform the world.”

So it causes me only the mildest of shudders to hear that a fairly recent pupil of my own last month scored the winning goal for the Parliamentary soccer team. Miss Beale would not have been amused and I fear that Sir Geoffrey Jackson may feel a tremor of anguish. Potter will once more be pained. But it indicates vitality, courage and initiative, and these are qualities which are very much alive in the girls’ independent schools.

Margaret knew that not all who find their wings will use them, and many who do may never have the chance to fly free; to her the important thing was that they knew they could. “Vitality, courage and initiative…..are very much alive in the girls’ independent schools.” EL

In “Public School” she was reviewing a BBC 2 series of 10 programmes on Radley College. She was well aware of the contentious role played by TV documentaries, and knew when a pinch of salt was needed to balance its seasoning, but opens disarmingly with what seems to be a compliment, a cue for those who knew her to pay close attention to what follows.

“The first thing to be said about ‘Public School’….. is that it is quite astonishingly truthful. The Headmaster has no more than ‘a reasonable degree’, but more importantly he is a Double Blue; his wife-(presumably- we are never formally introduced to her)- is seen applauding Mrs.Thatcher on Election Night; the appalling youth and his even more appalling girlfriend seen tangling with the master after the ‘Social’ disco is the real thing, not simulated.

The musical boy lands the scholarship ultimately ‘because he will fit in here’; the dons, glass in hand, solemnly discuss their own exceptional quality and the superior salaries rightly paid ‘in schools of this kind’; the Headmaster says straight out that ‘it is mad to suggest that a school can be a democracy’. What oft was thought, indeed, but very seldom so candidly expressed.”

She gives credit where it is due; the boys are “handsome, healthy and humorous”, no doubt due to the excellent food they get. “As television, the series was a delight to watch, as is any picture of a little world enclosed in its own standards and inhabited by attractive confident people.”

But the question of access to that favoured and rather nostalgic world has to be raised. “The series was aimed not only at those receptive to its message. It was screened all over Britain in homes of every description…strikers in Sheffield, crofters in Shetland and Pakistanis in Birmingham, and above all, by countless teachers in maintained schools.” What of the effect on a universal audience?

Ultimately, Radley College and its ilk are assessed in the colder light of reality. “One wonders how many of the ‘dons’ have any experience of the world in which most teachers have to survive, a world where there is no automatic respect for scholarship or consent to authority. It would be interesting to see how they would cope under an exchange system which put them in front of an average class in an inner-city comprehensive school.” Interesting indeed to one who had already faced and passed that particular test.

(About the same time as MDH was reflecting on Radley, Alan Sillitoe's novel "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner" and its expose of the bleak life of a Borstal boy, was filmed. It made a star of Tom Courtenay and in one memorable scene his character and the Borstal team have to compete with a team from "Rabley."

In the changing-room they exchange a few telling remarks on conditions in their respective institutions, concluding that there are many unexpected similarities, but there the resemblance ends.)

The real flaw in the Radley system was that contact with the opposite sex was limited to permission for pin-ups ("Buttocks and breasts are permitted") and twice-termly discos with imported girls from "high-class boarding schools", affording the possibility of "five minutes snogging on the dark playing-fields with a virtual stranger."

She could not resist ending by comparison with "Grange Hill", with its "good-humoured hopeful attack on life" as lived by the fictitious community of a London comprehensive, which she felt was closer to reality than the charming anachronism of Radley College. But being Margaret, she knew comparisons are odorous, and teasingly invited tenders for a solution: "How do we bring the two worlds closer together? Are there any old Radleians teaching at Grange Hill." EL

"Public School" BBC 2 (reviewed by Margaret Higginson)

The first thing to be said about "Public School", a series of ten programmes on the daily life of Radley College, is that it is quite astonishingly truthful.. The Headmaster has no more than "a reasonable degree" but more importantly he is a Double Blue; his wife - (presumably - we are never formally introduced to her) is seen applauding Mrs. Thatcher on Election Night.; the appalling youth and his even more appalling girl-friend seen tangling with the master after the "Social" disco is the real thing, not simulated; the musical boy lands the scholarship ultimately "because he will fit in here"; the dons (glass in hand) solemnly discuss their own exceptional quality and the superior salaries rightly paid "in schools of this kind"; the Headmaster says straight out that "it is mad to suggest that a school can be a democracy". What oft was thought, indeed, but very seldom so candidly expressed, particularly in 1980.

Plainly the school charmed and disarmed the film-makers. Who would not be charmed by a headmaster so delightfully un-pompous, with such an engaging, self-deprecating grin? Or by boys so handsome and healthy and humorous? (The food at Radley must excellent.) Everybody on the programme looked happy.

The film-makers allowed this impression to come through untouched by any hint of the critical or the snide - unless, indeed, they intended irony when they gave us a last glimpse of the boy who had won the plum music scholarship leading the Westminster Abbey choir in the Magnificat. ("And the rich He hath sent empty away"?)

As television the series was a delight to watch, as is any picture of a little world enclosed in its own standards and conventions and inhabited by attractive, confident people. It must have given great pleasure to those already familiar with the public schools, and many a humbler family must have felt a wave of "If only…." It was a nostalgic glimpse of a world we have all inhabited in our imagination in the school stories of our youth. Indeed, the admired tyrant of the middle School could have stepped straight out of the "Boys' Own Paper" for 1890 and it was surprising that his frequent roars of "You vile boy!" were not addressed to Bunter. Splendid, old-fashioned stuff!

Nevertheless, the series was aimed not only at those already receptive to its message. It was screened all over Britain in homes of every description, seen no doubt by strikers in Sheffield, crofters in Shetland and Pakistanis in Birmingham, and above all by countless teachers in maintained schools. What would be their reaction to the film's implicit assumption that what was being offered at Radley (at a price of £3000 a year) was a superior form of education and that the task of imparting it required exceptional qualities? All we have so far seen of the academic element is one glimpse of the Headmaster elucidating a poem and one lesson in mental arithmetic which would be old-fashioned in a modern primary school. (I write at a disadvantage, since only six of the ten programmes have yet been shown. There must be computers yet to come and there must surely be a programme on results and destinations, where we shall hear that Radley produces brilliant thinkers, artists and engineers?).

The watching teacher who has been wrestling all day with thirty or more ill-motivated and widely-assorted boys and girls may possibly feel that he could do almost as well if confronted with twenty eager lads fresh from the best preparatory schools and well broken-in to discipline. One wonders how many of the "dons" have any experience of the world in which most teachers have to survive, a world where there is no automatic respect for scholarship or consent to authority. It would be interesting to see how they would cope under an exchange system which put them in front of an average class in an inner-city comprehensive school. The boys, too, in the programmes to date, have shown no sign of understanding, or wishing to understand their contemporaries elsewhere. True, they rebelled against £30 000 being spent on a new golf-course, but no hint was given of any alternative proposition such as scholarships for "outsiders".

And, however warmly one supports the principle of the Assisted Places scheme, one wonders, watching the new boys settling down in the dormitory on the first night, comparing the beds with the ones at their preparatory schools, how any boy from Ancoats or Poplar, however potentially brilliant, could ever cross that social gulf.

It was in the programme on sex, however, that the gulf between the boys' public schools and the realities of life yawned impassably. We were assured that Radley was heterosexual, indeed liberal in its outlook - were they not allowed to display pin-ups? ("Buttocks and breasts are permitted"). Did they not, furthermore, hold twice-a-term discos for senior boys and bus-loads of girls from high-class boarding schools? The assumption was plain that adolescent sexuality was simply an itch that had to be scratched now and then and the highest price was five minutes snogging on the dark playing-fields with a virtual stranger. Evidently the ideas of girls as persons, the other half of the human race, with ideas and perceptions and attitudes that could perhaps enlighten and complement a totally masculine ethos had simply not occurred to anyone, We were shown no sharing in debate or drama or even in that supreme solvent of barriers, music. The 'sex' episode was the strongest argument I have come across for true co-education; not for the addition of a few girls in the sixth-form where their scarcity must make them objects of undue and distorting interest, but (as the Headmaster-elect of Eton has wisely said) for the genuine kind that involves equal partnerships and reciprocal influence throughout.

By chance over the same period as "Public School" has been screened, there has also been a BBC 1. series called "Grange Hill", a children's story based on the life of a London comprehensive school. It shows a mixed collection of lively children coping with the universal problems of adolescence and in addition with poverty, domestic crises and racial tensions; they are supported, driven, encouraged and scolded by fallible but gallant teachers, willing to involve themselves with their pupils and together making a good-humoured, hopeful attack on life. It is indeed a different world from Radley, but to one watcher at least Radley seems the fiction and Grange Hill the reality. How do we bring the two worlds closer together? Are there any old Radleians teaching at Grange Hill? .

Margaret Higginson taught at Wycombe Abbey, Bemrose School (a large maintained grammar school for boys, and St. Paul's Girls' School before becoming headmistress of a Direct Grant School (Bolton School, Girls' Division). She has also had brief experience of teaching in an East London comprehensive school.

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Tributes

As in previous issues we are including some tributes to Margaret which come in the form of speeches or letters.

The following transcribed extract is from a parent at St Paul's Girls'School:

My dear Miss Higginson

Our daughter tells me you have obtained a post as Headmistress of Bolton Grammar School so this brings the very heartiest congratulations of my husband and myself.

Until one has left school quite a while to get things into perspective you don't realise just how much your teachers and their ability to impart knowledge have meant. Our daughter has gained more from you than we can ever express and it is due to your influence that she has preserved a sense of proportion and has kept alive her interest in literature and social problems and has prevented her from becoming too 'arty'……we can't be grateful enough to you and the background of St. Paul's.

Next, part of a letter written by Miss Meade, a former headmistress of Bolton School Girls' Division :

Dear Miss Higginson
I am so looking forward to seeing you as Head of the School, and I know now, what I had rather suspected when you came to see me, that by some stroke of genius they had chosen the absolutely right person for the School's Head.

16 Broadwater Down
Tunbridge Wells

5. 3. 57

Dear Miss Higginson

Very many thanks for the charming way you have written to me & for the welcome you have given me as a guest at the Eightieth Birthday celebrations. I am so much looking forward to seeing you as Head of the School, & I know now, what I had rather suspected when you came to see me, that by some stroke of genius they had chosen the absolutely right person for the School's Head.

As my time at Bolton covered almost a quarter of the eighty years, I do feel a considerable responsibility in answering you about Francis Shuckburgh's article, & it is because this has weighed on me a good deal that I have delayed in writing to you. For one thing, I hate to lose your good opinion of me as a 'sporting character', & I fear that you may think that what I am going to say is prompted by personal feeling in some form. This is not so. The article seems to me unworthy of the occasion, trivial & very inaccurate, & would give to anyone outside the School a false impression of what we did & stood for. Worse still, I am sure it would be

Finally, a tribute to Margaret by Elaine Lever, student and friend.

Margaret Dora Higginson

After five years under the reign of Miss Varley, a benign but distant figure in academic gown and beautiful hand-knitted lace stockings, MDH arrived in our lives. A plain classic suit and shrewd grey-green eyes that could sum you up in a trice. A new face, with no intention of ruling from on high. Firm but kind. It was 1954, and we knew then that things had changed for ever; goodbye white ankle-socks, prunes and prisms; hello independent thought and adult responsibility.

Margaret knew very well what she had taken on, and its potential. We were her first Sixth Form (a title that still carries a resonance that makes "Year 12" sound like a prison sentence with no remission for good conduct.) From the start, she meant to get to know us. The irony of teaching is that the higher your position, the less time you get to teach: she insisted on a period of general study with every class during her first year, in addition to teaching A-level English and Scholarship.

She began our first lesson by asking us all to write down the Ten Commandments. What a study our faces must have been; Juliet Rosenthall exchanged glances with me and made a small gesture of resignation. We need not have worried; though privately devout, she never imposed her personal beliefs on us, being well aware from her own background that the North was the home turf of free thought.

Margaret saw English teaching as a sharing of her own pleasure in good literature. In her eyes, reading was as much a creative act as writing, and equally demanding, a meeting of minds. She set a higher personal standard of teaching than some of us received at university, believing that "Much is required of those to whom much is given."

We were intrigued by her recommendation as holiday reading "South Riding", which deals with the trials of a red-haired young woman who returns to her roots as the new headmistress of a rather nondescript school on the borders of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Was there a touch of mischief about her choice?

I corresponded with Margaret for half a century, and last saw her this summer. Frail in body, but still her old self, affectionate and intelligent as ever, she stopped me trying to thank her for making me the woman I am. I am just one of the thousands who will be grateful to her as long as we live. Goodbye, inspiring tutor and very dear friend.

Elaine Lever, student and friend

In the next issue ....

More newspaper articles, original writing, tributes, illustrations and a continuation of the biography from Margaret's arrival at Bolton School.

The archive working committee from the Old Girls' Association gratefully acknowledges the numerous contributions from a wide variety of sources connected with the family, life and work of MDH.

Every effort has been made to preserve the integrity of the extracts used, to ensureaccuracy and to respect anonymity where applicable.

If any Old Girl (or indeed anyone else) would like to offer reminiscences or anecdotes about Margaret we should be very glad to receive them. Please send them to:
Carol Haslam at Bolton School or email them to: *CHaslam@girls.bolton.sch.uk*