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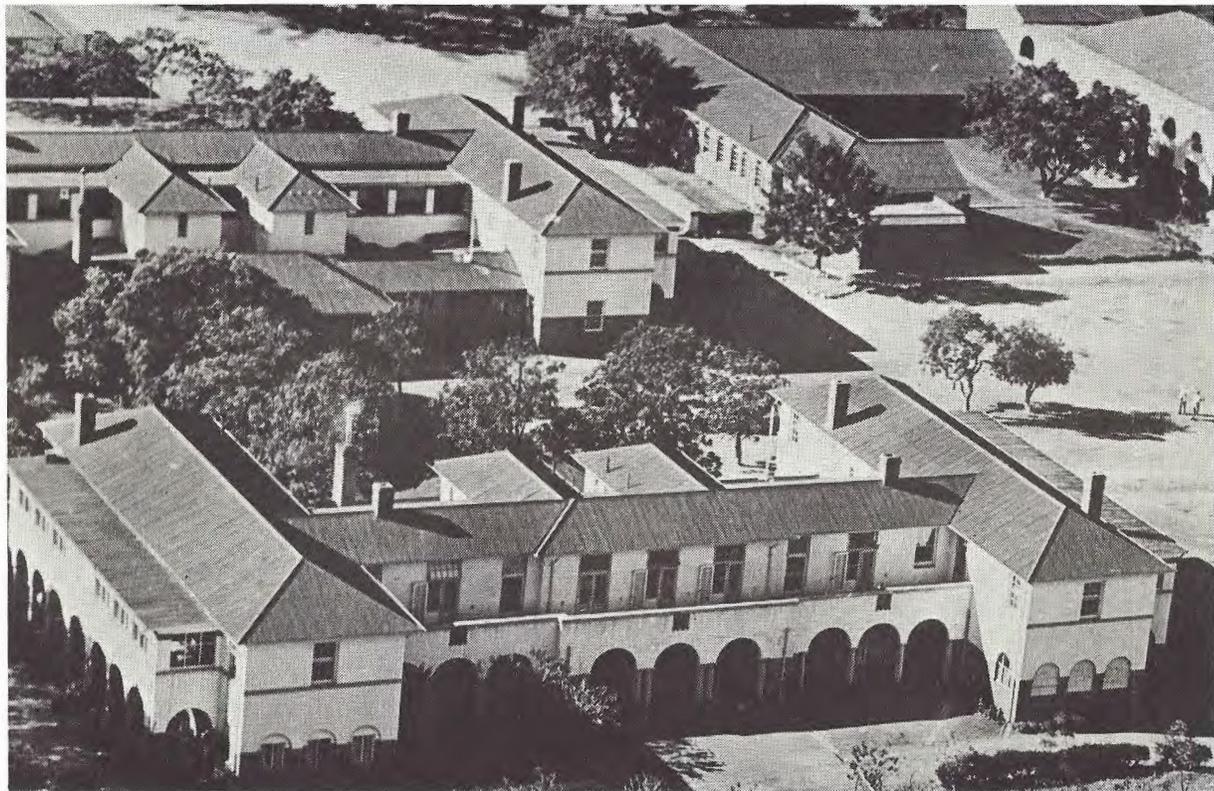
War and Peace — and Expansion, 1939–1955

'Like Topsy, it just grewed and grewed'

Traditional, after Harriet Beecher Stowe.

1939 BROUGHT World War and Milton felt its effects far more strongly than it had a generation earlier: when the third term began five members of staff had left on active service and, by the end of the war, there were more than 900 old Miltonians serving in the armed forces. The school supported War Funds strongly and within the first year had sent £100 to the "Speed the Planes" Fund, £30 to the Air Relief Fund and £50 to the National War Fund; one form regularly collected all the more interesting items of local news from the papers and these were sent to Rhodesian soldiers serving in East Africa. The Old Miltonians virtually ceased to exist as a club other than in name for, in the words of the 1941 Miltonian: "There are very few O.M.s left in Bulawayo; they are chiefly those who have just left school and who will be in the Forces very soon, and a few who are too old for military service." By the end of the war, 37 O.M.s had been decorated for valour or for their war services, 13 mentioned in dispatches and 113 had lost their lives. Of those who died, the longest-serving Miltonian was Captain Angus Campbell who had been at the school as a boy in its early years and returned as a member of staff in 1923, becoming Pioneer Housemaster; literally more than half of his life — he was forty when he died in 1941 — had been spent at Milton. Another melancholy distinction he achieved was that of being the first Rhodesian Rhodes Scholar to lose his life in the war.¹

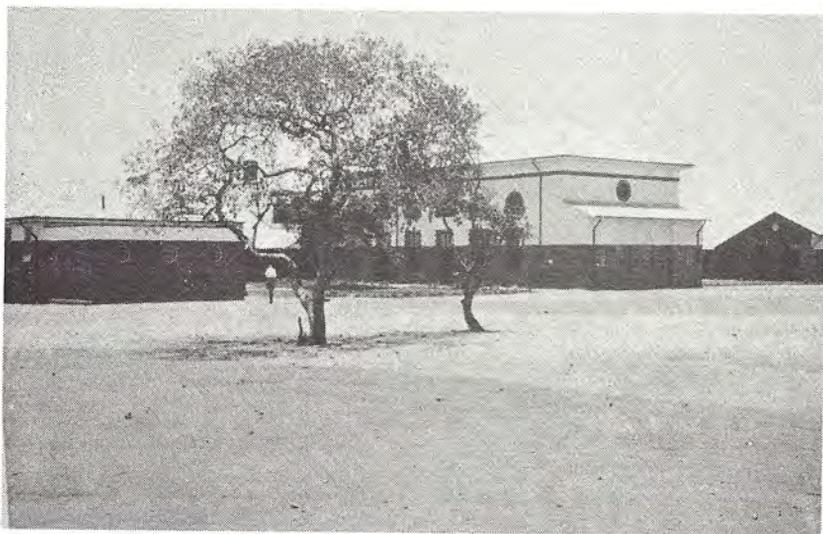
Nevertheless, Milton continued to expand throughout the years of the war; the buildings added in 1937 soon proved to be insufficient and further new rooms were required — a third science laboratory, additional woodwork and metalwork rooms, an ordinary classroom and a staff



Aerial view of the Hostels, looking North, c.1945.



The Rainy Season, early 1940s. (Looking South from Pioneer towards the cricket nets.)



The Beit Hall from the Main Quad, early 1940s.



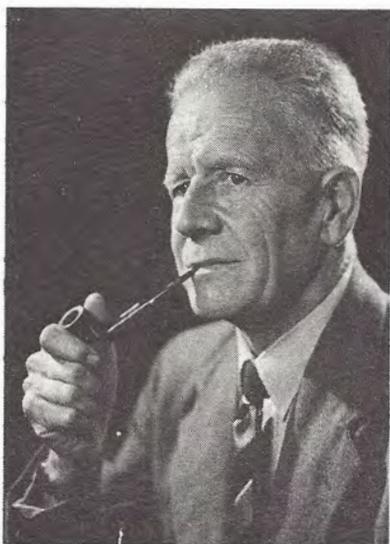
The Dining Hall and Pioneer House, early 1940s.



The West Wing of the School and Charter House, early 1940s.



H.G. Livingston, 1930-1941.



L.R. Morgan, 1941-1942.

room. The growth in numbers was confined to the lower and middle schools, indeed boys were leaving at a younger age than ever before and the average age of the school was dropping. There seem to have been two reasons for this: employers were anxious to take on new staff "sufficiently young to enable them to work for a considerable time before they came of military age"; and secondly the Cambridge School Certificate Examination was taken a year earlier than the Cape Matriculation used to be, with the result that boys were gaining matriculation exemption that year earlier and going on to university or further training without attempting Higher School Certificate. The consequences were felt particularly keenly in sport where the average age of first teams dropped to sixteen.

In the first year of the war, the long-heralded Sports Pavilion was at last opened; for several years tuck shop profits had been credited to the Pavilion Fund and, in September 1938, the Headmaster's wife and members of the School Council had organised a morning market and fete which had raised £123 16s. 1d.; the hope was now expressed that "in the not-too-distant future a start may be made on this much-wanted building". The final impetus came from the Old Miltonians; the moneys raised for the school war memorial had been considerably in excess of its cost and it had originally been intended that the balance should go towards the provision of a fives court. However, it had become apparent that "this facility would not fill a popular need", with the result that the O.M.s decided to contribute the balance of the War Memorial Fund — some £460 — to the new pavilion and building was thus able to start. The ceremony of opening the pavilion was carried out by the Mayor, Mr. T.A.E. Holdengarde, and the building provided seating for about 150 spectators, a large changing-room with showers, tea-room, store rooms and a squash court; then, as now, it overlooked the main cricket field, the Oval. Hockey also came to Milton in 1940 although it was to be some years before it was played on the school's own fields.

1944 saw a determined effort to improve the quality of the playing fields: a new rugby field was planted in January, a turf wicket came into use at the nets and the main cricket field was newly turfed at the end of the year. The real problem had always been that of a limited water supply but both Municipality and Government had come to the rescue, the former by offering Milton water from the Hillside Dams, the latter by bearing the cost of the pipe-laying and pumping.

The end of the war saw an increased growth in numbers and two new classrooms were added in 1946; even so, by 1948 "the boarding houses

were filled to capacity, the form rooms overflowing and one form condemned to a peripatetic existence"² — and this was only the beginning of an inexorable increase that was to be maintained for nearly twenty years, a reflection of the enormous post-war expansion of the whole country and subsequently the boom that followed the establishment of the Federation. The first two years of the fifties emphasised this trend — during 1950 numbers rose from 420 to 457; by the end of 1951 they were 581, far outstripping available accommodation and precipitating another "housing crisis": the prep-rooms in both hostels had to be employed as classrooms, two marquees were erected on the open space between the main block and the dining hall³ and an O.M. builder put up two new classrooms in a record time of twelve days⁴. Speech Night was compelled to adjourn to the City Hall as the school's own Beit Hall was no longer large enough and on that occasion Jerry Downing, the new headmaster, remarked that the solution to overcrowding in schools was not to add classrooms but to build new schools.⁵ Little did he know that within the decade Milton's population was to double.

The war years and those immediately following had been difficult ones for Milton in many respects and the number of changes at the helm had not helped. At the end of the first term 1941 Mr. Livingston had been transferred to Prince Edward after eleven years and two terms at Milton during which time the school had developed in many respects. His successor was L.R. Morgan who was a Rhodes Scholar and had been headmaster of Chaplin for fourteen years⁶. Great things were expected but Mr. Morgan was still only settling in when, after four terms, he was appointed Assistant Education Officer in Salisbury, and subsequently Secretary for Education. He was followed by Mr. W. Gebbie who had taught at Milton in the twenties before becoming headmaster successively of four junior schools — Gatooma, Sinoia, Prince Edward Junior and David Livingstone; he came to Milton at the beginning of 1943, Jerry Downing having "acted" for the third term of 1942, as he did again in 1945 when Mr. Gebbie took leave. The following year Mr. Gebbie moved to the Allan Wilson School in Salisbury⁷ and Mr. A. Ball, deputy head of Umtali High School, became headmaster. The Miltonian of December 1946 was unusually frank:

"During the last six years Milton has had six changes in Headmasters or Acting Headmasters, and though no doubt each has contributed something to the school, it is not an enviable record as a good measure of continuity is usually desirable in a



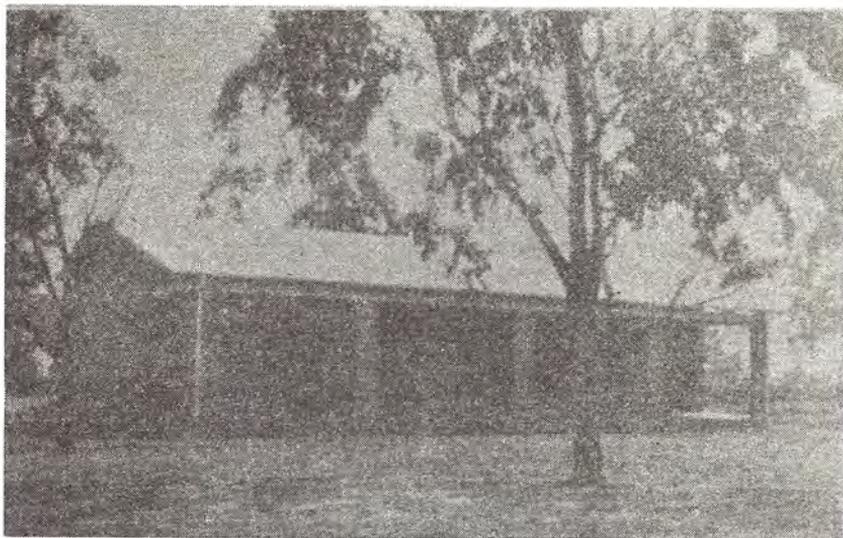
W. Gebbie, 1943-1946.



A. Ball, 1946-1950.



Classrooms, 1951.



Classrooms erected in twelve days by Les Playford, 1951. (They are the present Rooms 20 & 21.)

school. Therefore in warmly welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Ball we openly add the hope that they will be with us for a reasonable period . . .”

The “reasonable period” proved in fact to be a term less than four years for Mr. Ball chose to retire in April 1950 and was followed by Jerry (“Pop”) Downing whose connection with Milton already spanned more than a quarter of a century. He had come to Southern Rhodesia in 1924 to join the Milton staff (where he met his wife who had been there since 1919) and he remained there until 1948 when, as deputy headmaster, he was promoted to Education Officer in Salisbury: thus his entire career as a teacher in Rhodesia was spent at Milton — and thirty of his thirty-two working years⁸. On his retirement at the end of 1955 tribute was paid to “Pop”:

“ . . . through his endeavours the school has been guided into maintaining a standard second to none in the schools of Rhodesia”, and indeed he saw Milton through those difficult years when numbers far outran accommodation and, although the same problem was to recur to challenge his successor, he presided over Milton’s transformation into one of the Federation’s biggest schools and ensured that its essential character and traditions remained unaffected.

1953 was a year that witnessed several significant events either directly or indirectly affecting the school’s life. For Britain, her Empire and Commonwealth, it was Coronation year and the editor of the Miltonian wrote that the school would “not easily forget the feelings of excitement, joy and loyalty which were aroused on that notable occasion. We in Southern Rhodesia were certainly moved to unanimous enthusiasm on that day of days”. For Rhodesia it was the year in which Federation became a reality, a matter on which, to quote the Miltonian again, “opinions were somewhat divided. The question as to whether there should be a Federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland brought forth conflicting ideas which were expressed in the newspapers, on the streets, in homes, and wherever there was a gathering of people. Even the youngsters at school took the matter to heart — a good sign, probably, seeing that the decision on this matter might affect their future very closely. . . . Let us hope that this new step will prove a blessing, and that the boys and girls in our schools will benefit by it.”

For Bulawayo 1953 also meant the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition and a visit from Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret. Milton, together with all the other Bulawayo schools and most

of the city's population, "gathered on that auspicious day to cheer them wholeheartedly". The three-month-long exhibition seems to have been something of a distraction from school life and Milton scholars also took advantage of the cultural feast provided — the Halle Orchestra and Sir John Barbirolli, the Covent Garden Opera, the Sadlers Wells Ballet and a Shakespearian company led by Sir John Gielgud.⁹

1953 left at least one very permanent mark on Milton — its magnificent swimming pool. Plans for a pool had been discussed more than ten years earlier and serious fund-raising had begun in the years after the war, with the biggest single contribution of £5000 coming from the State Lotteries and £1000 from the Baron family as a memorial to their father. A school fete in 1949 raised £600 and another £900 came in donations so that work was able to begin, although as an economy the school did the initial excavation of the site itself. There were many other obstacles and difficulties along the way, not least that the early design for the pool omitted both a chlorination plant and any adequate method of filtration. So long was the building process that it put the Miltonian in mind of Wordsworth's lines in "Tintern Abbey":

"Five years have past; five summers with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
With a soft inland murmur."

But finally, as "suicide month" drew on, the pool was complete: it measured twenty-five metres by twenty-five yards and held some 256,000 gallons (1,163,600 litres) of water which was "filtered thoroughly every ten hours"; there were diving boards at one, two and three metres and the pool ranged in depth from a little over a metre to three-and-a-half metres. It went into use as soon as it was completed — and not just by Milton as both Townsend and St. Peter's were allowed to use it on a regular basis — although it was surrounded only "by a fence and hessian". Plans for subsequent developments included "a suitable wall, and three terraces, and changing rooms containing fifty cubicles". The plans were modified somewhat before completion but even so the final cost was £17,500, an enormous sum in 1953.

Notes

¹ After the war the Old Miltonians endowed a prize, to be known as the A.D. Campbell Memorial Prize, for the Boy obtaining "the highest position in English Language and

English Literature in the Cambridge Certificate Examination” — English had been Campbell’s subject.

²“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”. . . The same thing was true in the first term of 1985.

³The area was still then bare earth; now it is tarred, named the Morgan Quad and contains three basketball courts.

⁴They are the present rooms 20 and 21.

⁵The Miltonian reported: “There is one bright spot on the horizon — a proposed new High School at North End which will probably relieve the congestion at Milton”. It didn’t.

⁶At this time comparatively young men were often appointed as headmasters but the Ministry seems to have believed in a “new broom” policy; headmasters were regularly transferred (e.g. Mr. Livingston) or promoted to the higher reaches of the inspectorate (e.g. Mr. de Beer) or into the Ministry itself (e.g. Mr. Morgan).

⁷His sixth school as headmaster — surely some sort of a record? . . .

⁸He also forged another link with St. John’s Cathedral where he was assistant organist for twenty-three years and a loyal member of the congregation right up to his death; there is a memorial plaque to him, bearing the school motto, in the cloisters.

⁹One wonders if anyone went to quite the lengths of that anonymous Milton boy of 1937 who “sold his trousers to obtain the money necessary for admission”. (See “Odds and Ends”, July 1937.)

Odds and Ends 1939–1955

May 1940: The experiment of afternoon school was begun.

July 1940: The Inter-School Rugby Tournament was cancelled because of “the prevalence of epidemics in the country”.

September 1940: Milton regained the Mim Du Toit Cup by defeating Prince Edward.

1941: “The criminal record of the staff has been maintained by a conviction for ‘speeding’. This bad news was somewhat mitigated by the inference of improvement in the quality of staff cars. The culprit is said to have achieved 32 m.p.h., thus equalling the School record set up in Selborne Avenue about five years ago.”

December 1941: The size of the Miltonian was reduced “not due to lack of material, but entirely to economy” and the price came down from half-a-crown to 1/6d.

8 November 1942: Flying Officer R.M. Quarendon, a member of staff, was killed in action in the R.A.F. whilst protecting the Allied landings in North Africa. The Education Department only released him in December 1940 after a protracted struggle.

10 November 1942: H.H. Davies, Minister of Internal Affairs and guest at Speech Night, warned the school that, although “this war will be won . . . I want you to realise that it will bring about changes in

this world which will claim your full efforts . . . the old order of things has passed”.

December 1942: The Miltonian was smaller than ever and the price came down to 1/-.

November, 1943: The guest at Speech Night was the Prime Minister, Sir Godfrey Huggins, and he told the audience: “The school’s record in the forces is a very fine one, and if all Old Miltonians who have been obliged to remain in civil life have played their part with the same courage and ideals of service and sacrifice, then indeed Milton has a record second to none and one that cannot be surpassed.”

6 June 1944: “On the morning of the invasion of Normandy Mr. Gebbie held a short service for the School in the Beit Hall very soon after the news came through.”

29 June 1944: The Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, K.C.M.G., visited the school shortly before his departure from Rhodesia.

29 November 1944: In the course of his report at Speech Night, the headmaster lamented the lack of parental support: “We produced two plays and the total number of parents who attended was 35. In ten first team cricket matches the average of parents was 1.1. This is disappointing.”

23 May 1945: The new Governor, Admiral Sir Campbell Tait, K.C.B., visited the school and gave its members some advice: not to owe money to anyone; not to accept presents that would put them under any obligation; to take great care in choosing only the best characters as friends, and “to fear God and honour the King”.

September 1945: The main cricket field was completely turfed in time for the first match of the new season — this was the first match at Milton to be played on a turf wicket and Milton lost by 37 runs to Mr. Batchelor’s XI.¹

3rd Term 1945: The Beit Hall was out of use for most of the term whilst an effort was made to improve its acoustics “by spraying the walls with some form of asbestos”.

27 October 1946: Mrs. Ball, the new headmaster’s wife, entertained the whole staff to a tennis party. “It was a very pleasant function and much enjoyed by both the players and non-players.”

December 1946: On his retirement from Prince Edward, Mr. H.G. Livingston settled in Bulawayo.

December 1946: No fewer than six ex-members of the Milton staff were

appointed headmasters: H.H. Cole to Prince Edward, D.C. Ferrer to Guinea Fowl, J.H. Mather to Blakiston, J. Simpson to Gatooma, A.R.J. Ridley to Enkeldoorn and J. Mitchell to Hillside.

February 1947: Sir John and Lady Chancellor paid yet another visit to Milton.

March 1947: Speech Night was moved to the first term of the year and the guest was Mr. Justice (later Sir Robert) Tredgold.

14 April 1947: Milton took part in the welcome for the Royal Family and particularly enjoyed the fireworks display at Central Sports Ground.

8 October 1948: Milton staged its first full-length play since 1941, Karel Capek's "R.U.R.", a play "symbolising the inability of man to hold in restraint the mechanical devices he has created. When the climax is reached man is exterminated by his machines and the Robots rule over the world, but not before man has doomed them by destroying the formula for their fabrication".

November 1948: At the end of the Plumtree-Milton cricket match, Mr. Mac W. Ingram was presented with a clock having completed his fiftieth consecutive match as umpire in the Plumtree-Milton contests.

December 1949: The Miltonian raised its price to 2/6 and reintroduced advertising in an attempt to counter the annual loss of between £30 and £40.

3 March 1950: Colonel Sir Ellis Robins, resident director of the B.S.A. Company, presented the school with a new flag to replace that originally given by Sir Henry Birchenough in 1925 to hang by the school war memorial.

May 1950: The state of the rugby fields caused much unhappiness: they "were quite the worst they have ever been. In fact it is almost impossible to visualise them being any worse. Only two weeks after the start of the season there was not a blade of grass to be seen on any one of the three fields, and where six years ago there had once been a second Hartsfield one saw only thick dust inter-mingled with small rocks, pot-holes and occasional thorns. The appalling conditions did not encourage any type of contact with the ground, and the many small cuts and scratches which were unavoidable invariably developed into festering wounds, which were never really allowed to heal. . . One particular field was

- covered by four genuine inches of fine, dirty dust, which, although soft, didn't do one's lungs any good. At one stage the sore throat and 'flu epidemic was so serious that several well-known doctors strongly recommended that all rugby should cease immediately . . . Players literally detested practices, which were forever taking a heavy toll in injuries."
- July 1950: Milton produced a papier-mâché model of the ideal Rhodesian farm for the Bulawayo Agricultural Show; it attracted a good deal of attention and a photograph appeared in the Chronicle.
- July/August 1951: "The school, staff and boys were fairly badly affected by an outbreak of 'flu."
- 13 February 1952: Colonel Brady, the school's second headmaster, died at the age of 76; at the semi-military funeral, the headmaster and head boy were two of the pall-bearers.
- March 1952: A block of four new classrooms came into use².
- 26 July 1952: On the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Rhodes the school prefects attended a service held at Rhodes' Statue in Main Street.
- 1952: A school tuck shop — "The Blue Leopard" — reappeared, equipped with a general dealer's licence "to get square with the law"; it made a profit of £151/3/1 in its first year.
- 1952: Milton joined with the Convent School in a production of "H.M.S. Pinafore".
- June/July 1953: "A fairly serious outbreak of German Measles affected several classes and caused disorganisation in the Rugby teams."
- September 1953: Bulawayo City Council presented the school with a framed reproduction of "Alan Wilson's Last Stand".
- 12–14 August 1954: Milton and Northlea presented "The Mikado" in the Large City Hall.
- 29 July 1955: The guest at Speech Night was the Archbishop of Central Africa, the Most Reverend Dr. E.F. Paget, who told the audience that "the grand aim of our educational system should be to send forth men and women with the nobility of character, the strength of spirit and the freedom from self-interest which would enable them to build up in our multi-racial society a truly multi-racial culture, and to resist wherever it is met any tendency to suppress or retard any group within the community."

Notes

¹ F.W. Batchelor, coach of the 1st XI.

² The present rooms 26 to 29.