

AUTHOR'S NOTES

When I was asked to write the history of King Edward VII School, I was delighted to accept because I have long been fascinated by the extraordinary changes, events and achievements that have defined the history of the school during the last one hundred years. I particularly wanted to get a proper understanding of the major constitutional crises that faced the school in 1926-7, 1944-5, 1965-69 and 1985-86, and also discover exactly just how Wesley College and the Sheffield Royal Grammar School were fused into the new entity that became King Edward VII School in 1905.

It soon became apparent that there were two histories of KES. One that explores the symbiotic relationship of the school with the City Council and the manner with which the school coped with the education legislation introduced by successive governments, the other that is the "family" history of the over 15,000 Old Edwardians and over 1000 staff members who have studied or taught at the school since 1905. The first is to be found in the minutes of the meetings of the Governors and the Education Committee, in letters and reports written by Headmasters and Council Officers, in local press articles and in discussions with former senior Councillors and Education Department Officers. The latter was revealed in the school magazines, in concert and play programmes, photographs of sports teams, old school rules and in the numerous personal recollections of Old Edwardians, staff members and friends of the school.

I am neither an Old Edwardian nor a former teacher at the school, and so, through a hundred or so interviews during 2003 and 2004, I tried to gain an understanding of life at the school as former pupils and staff remembered it. For most of them their memories revolve around celebrated teachers and notable pupils, familiar rooms and freezing playing fields, scout troops and sports teams, concerts, plays and societies and always the omniscient presence of the Headmaster of the day.

I am very much aware that only a few of the people who have gone through the school have been able to contribute their personal reminiscences, and that, therefore, this history is certain to be incomplete, because every person's story reveals some new aspect of life at KES. Nevertheless, in this book I have tried to write a reasonably full account of all the different periods of KES history, so that the book reflects the memories and opinions of those involved in all the decades, whilst also serving as a formal record of the school's progress over the last century. At the same time I have attempted to maintain a popular tempo to avoid overly turgid and tedious chapters.

I am particularly beholden to the two living Headteachers of the school, Russell Sharrock and Michael Lewis, for their advice, support and the reading of the early drafts of the book. Dr. Peter Beeley O.E. has also been particularly helpful, especially with information on the periods when Ronald Gurner and Richard Graham were Headmaster. I am indebted to Prof. John Roach for his help with the chapters dealing with the Grammar School from 1604 to 1905 and also Wesley College, to Chris Price for background information on several chapters and especially on the section dealing with comprehensive education in the Sixties. Dr. Don Nicolson, Secretary of the Old Edwardians' Association, has unearthed vast amounts of extra information through his enthusiastic use of the internet and Ann Smith, who first suggested the idea of a Centenary History, then helped to shape the scope of the book in the early days of preparation. Ann was one of the key people, along with Peter Lawton, who produced the excellent history of the school entitled "Tha'll never gerr in their" in 1995. We both agreed that this volume would be a more formal

chronological history of KES to complement the earlier anecdotal ninetieth anniversary book.

At a late stage, when I was on the fourth draft of the book, I came across a short history of the school written by V.J. Wrigley, a former Head of the History Department, who in the early Fifties undertook considerable research into the pre-history of KES from 1604-1905. His manuscript is full of alterations and revisions, and it is most likely that he intended to publish his findings when completed but they never reached the printers. They did not contradict anything I had written but they added considerably to the story of the Free Grammar School of King James, and he also included a note saying that this research might be useful to anyone writing the history of the school in the future. It reminded me, if ever I needed reminding, what a privilege it was to write about this remarkable school, where so many brilliant pupils and teachers had made their own worthwhile contribution during the last one hundred years.

John Cornwell

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