

De Aston School Song

Respice ! Respice ! Thoughts are behind us,
Far in the regions of memories dear,
As we retrace every step we have taken,
Many are dimmed, others vividly clear.
Are there regrets over times we have stumbled ?
Are there rejoicings o'er efforts achieved ?
The whole is a vision to teach us a lesson,
Be greater today than whenever we've lived.
Respice ! Aspice ! Prospice !
Floreat Schola Thomae de Aston !

Aspice! Aspice! Thoughts of the present
Thoughts of the faces around us today,
How well we know them, how much we love them,
Full of expression at work or at play,
Each boy resolve with one mind to be noble,
Each build a character worthy of fame,
Each do his work with a will that is eager,
Each on the wide field of life play the game,
Respice ! Aspice ! Prospice !
Floreat Schola Thomae de Aston !

Prospice ! Prospice ! Prospice! Thoughts are before us,
Thoughts of the future, the mighty unknown,
As we go forward to fight in the battle,
God give us courage and strength of his own.
Each set an ideal true in perfection,
Strive to attain it with body and soul,
Never lose heart or confess to be beaten,
Ever press onward and so reach the goal.
Respice ! Aspice! Prospice !
Floreat Schola Thomae de Aston.

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.

An Account by Robert Sullivan – written and presented to De Aston after a visit in 1994 – 66 years after leaving the school.



Figure 1: Robert Sullivan, De Aston Cricket Field, 1927.(Sullivan)

STARTING AT SCHOOL 1920

I entered De Aston in April, 1920, shortly after my tenth birthday. The school then comprised about 80 boarders and 40 or 50 dayboys under **Headmaster P.J. Timms**.¹

I started in Form 1 under form-master **C.V" Blanco" White**² and our form room was the gym, fine in summer but unheated in winter. Blanco had a withered right arm but a powerful and vicious left; he taught us History, English Grammar and Arithmetic. Besides this we learnt French English Literature (Shakespeare's 'Tempest'), Drawing and Scripture.

That first term I was in Dorm 5 above the refectory with six or seven others, mainly older than me except for **Charlie Stewart** from New Holland who was only nine. He and I were both terribly homesick and we absconded the first Saturday afternoon back to his home. We were returned next day by outraged parents but earned a certain satisfying notoriety among the other boys for our 'daring' exploit. The next term we were both relegated to Dorm 6 in the headmaster's attic with the other 9 and 10 year-olds!

SPORTS

The summers of 1920 and 21 were remarkable for the brilliant weather. Sport was compulsory in those days and cricket was played every afternoon from 4 till 5.30pm. There would be five games, three on the present ground and the fourth and fifth on the soccer ground, which was the field enclosed by the Legsby road and Willingham road up to Miss Hill's home, Fern House (?); (this is now all 'developed'.) There were matches every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon, against other grammar schools - Louth, Gainsborough, Clee, Caistor, Brigg, and village sides from Hainton, Middle Rasen, etc. Several Saturday games were Masters Matches, always captained by P.J. and nearly all masters took part. Reports of all these games are recorded in old volumes of 'The De Astonian'. One of the key matches of the season was always against Lincoln Railway Clerks and it was this team we were playing on a particular Saturday in 1920 (or 21?) when a violent thunderstorm brought play to a close. We learnt at teatime that Louth had been flooded to first-floor level and several people drowned.

¹ 1906 – 1936 Percy John Timms, born 1879. Headmaster from 1912. Appointed as Science and Maths.

² Is this 1918 - 1919 Victor Culmer White. Born 1897. Appointed as a Science Teacher. ?

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.

In the Christmas term we played soccer every afternoon after school on the aforementioned ground, two adjoining fields which accommodated five games. Compulsory for boarders but dayboys were strongly encouraged to take part, though some never did. Again, matches every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon and all boarders not playing had to attend and cheer on the touchlines whatever the weather. Matches were always refereed by **Thos.H."Bug" Court**, though he played once or twice in Masters matches. Rugby was played in the Easter Term until 1923 when it was discontinued because all other schools had abandoned it and we could no longer arrange fixtures

FELLOW STUDENTS

Most of the boarders came from Grimsby, trawlermen's sons like the Grants of the Grant-Baker Company and the Moores, while some, like Sam Melhuish (no picture available) and George Bunch, (see picture) were sons of owner-skippers who owned one boat. More were farmers' sons from the fen country between Lincoln and Boston, like the **Pearsons whose father farmed some 15,000 acres near Boston**. Some came from further afield, Derby, Liverpool, and one or two from London.

Dayboys were mostly from the town; the Crofts (bakers in Union Street – see picture), Knotts (publicans – see picture), Horatio Beckett, (see picture) the Morleys (owned the dress shop, Lacey and Clark in the marketplace, where Mrs Timms was an assistant before she married P,J.), Topliss, farmers, the Swalwells (see picture), Roaches and the Hutchins were all parsons' sons from local rectories. Some of the dayboys were scholarship boys from the day school in the town. Fees then were around £60 a year for boarders and about £10 for dayboys.

The Sixth Form varied in numbers; in 1920/21 there were several stalwarts like

- Wilson, (see picture),
- Timms, (see picture),
- Newling,
- Scupham,
- Richmond, (see picture),
- etc, all of whom went to Cambridge and had spectacular careers, and sportsmen like Goodwin (see picture),
- Marrows, (see picture), a powerful left-hander who often hit a cricket ball into the middle of the next field.

But there were stalwarts later too, -

- Swalwell, (see picture), and
- Roach, both parsons' sons,
- Bennett, (see picture),

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.

- Hardy,
- Fisher (see picture) and
- Batey (see picture),

all who went to Cambridge or other universities, - Hardy entirely on scholarships and bursaries, his father being a local village postman on about twenty five shillings a week and Eddy wearing the same old suit every day of the years I knew him; - (there were no university grants in those days.)



Figure 3: Wilson (School Collection)



Figure 2 : Marrows (School Collection)



Figure 5: Richmond (School Collection)



Figure 4: Bennett (School Collection)



Figure 9: Fisher 1927 (Sullivan)

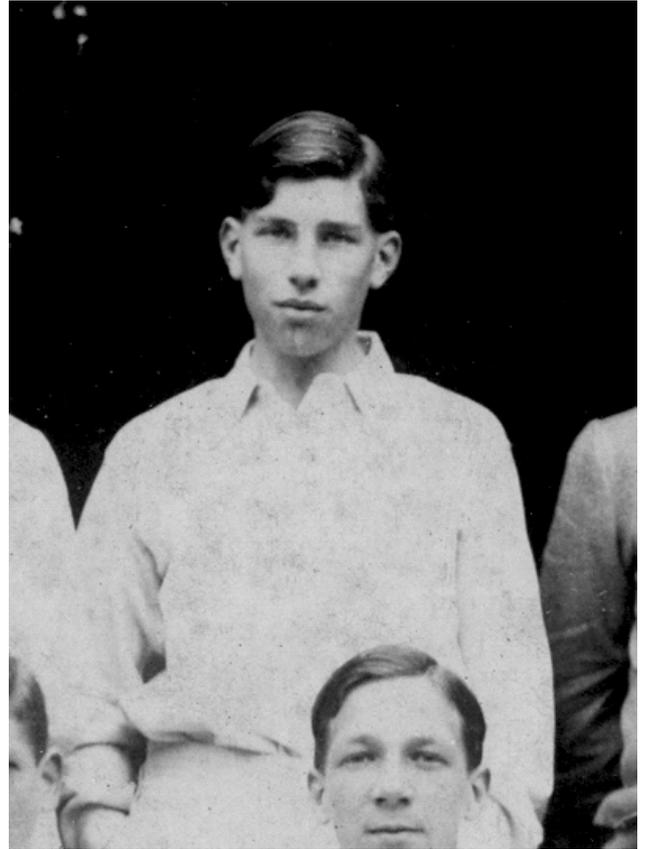


Figure 8: Timms (School Collection)



Figure 6 :Swalwell (School Collection)



Figure 7 : Batey (School Collection)



Figure 13 :Goodwin (School Collection)

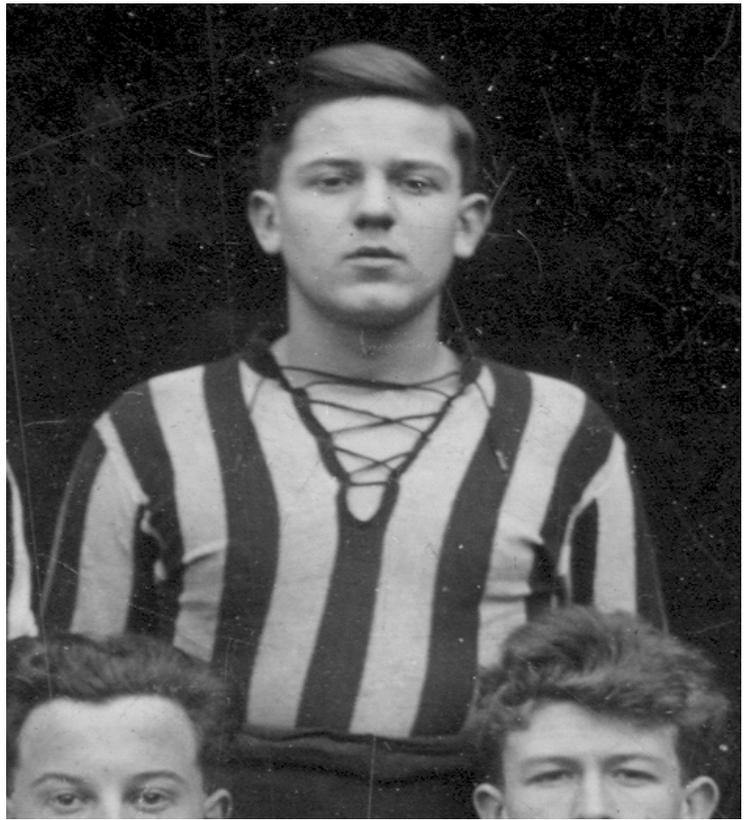


Figure 12: George Bunch (school collection)



Figure 11: J. Croft (School collection)

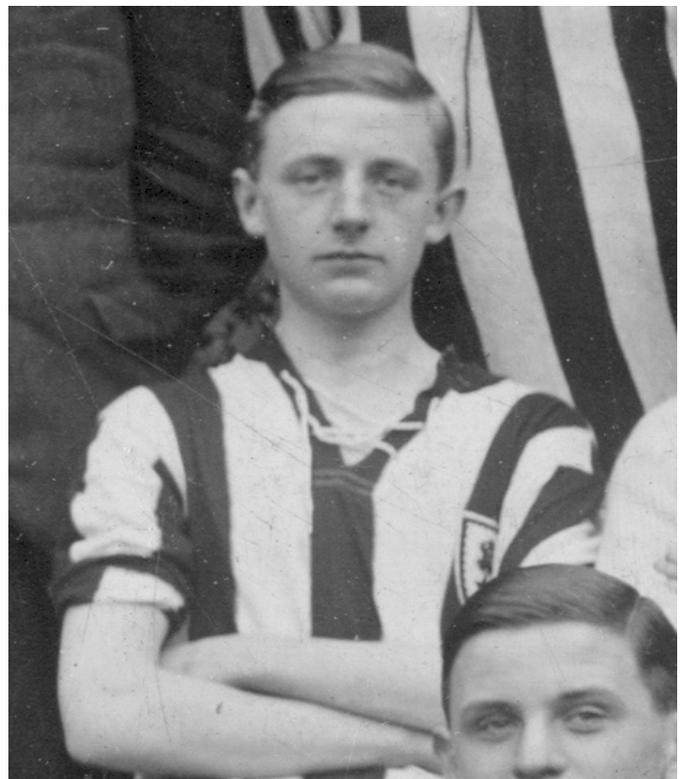


Figure 10: J. Knott (School collection)



Figure 15 : Horatio Beckett (School



Figure 14: Hutchins (school collection)

STAFF



Figure 16: P.J.Timms (School Coll.)

PJ Timms³ had a nickname of course, Pigeon, what else? I remember the warning in my early years, when we were perhaps larking about in the dorm after lights out. “Cave” “Pigeon” and all would scuttle hurriedly into bed pretending to be fast asleep. PJ taught Maths and chemistry to sixth formers but not much else. He was a great actor and always took a leading role in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas which the Drama group performed every year in the Corn

Exchange. He had a powerful baritone voice, and delighted to recite the Litany in Church on Sunday mornings, declaiming against such evils as “fornication and all other deadly sin” with great vehemence and I suspect for our benefit. He would follow this up in his Sunday evening sermons (instead of prep) where hell fire and damnation figured prominently.

Nominally, the headmaster was responsible for the sixth, which had no form room but studied with various masters, usually on a one to one basis in any vacant space, often the prefect’s room. I had some difficulty in finding this on my 1994 visit.

³ Percy John Timms, born 1879. taught at De Aston 1906 – 1936 Headmaster from 1912 – 32 year’s service



Figure 18: Mr Smith (School Collection)

Guy also taught. As the school had expanded after the War, there was a shortage of classrooms and Form 2b was housed in a wooden hut on 'the Paddock', heated by a large coke stove.



Figure 17: Mr T. Court (School Collection)

For the Christmas term 1920, I moved up to Form 2b under form-master **Guy Smith**.⁴ Guy was a veteran of the Palestine campaign in W.W.1 and was fond of regaling us with lurid tales of 'Johnny Turk', His mother ran the White Hart Hotel, where the Freemasons held their monthly lodge and I had many a cream tea when my father came and brought me a food parcel from home. Guy introduced us to Latin, Geometry and Algebra, all strange new knowledge for our young minds to grapple with. Latin was generally unpopular and some of the farmers' sons among us managed to escape it by taking Book-keeping instead, which

Thos. H. "Bug" Court,⁵ (Form 5)⁶, so called because of his hobby of collecting butterflies. In the early twenties he was unmarried and lived in school, spending all his evenings in the Master's Room at the top of the stairs. He taught French to all the upper school and also Geography and was both respected and feared. (I've see him knock a boy flying across the room with a Powerful swing to the head) At cricket he was just as likely to score 30 or 40 as to be out first ball and he would always turn out at soccer for a Masters' match when asked.

⁴ Guy Sydney Smith. Born 1887, taught at De Aston 1919 – 1958.

⁵ Thomas Hubert Court, born 1881, taught De Aston 1903 – 1947.

⁶ The rear of another Sullivan photograph shows Form V in 1927 to be the present ground floor Art Room belonging to Robin Conybeare, known as room 2/3 in 2004.

His weakness was a distressing liability to throw an epileptic fit especially in very cold weather and recall his walking off the pitch when refereeing a soccer match and falling to the round foaming the mouth, while we boys all looked on fascinated. He acquired a French car (not a Bugatti) and also a charming wife (to everyone's surprise) in the late twenties. Apart from "Bug" only the headmaster had a car, a nice big American Studebaker. All the other masters using bikes or walking.

Cars were, anyway, not all that common in the twenties, mainly T-model Fords at first but Morris Oxfords and Cowleys soon made their appearance. A kind of social status obtained amongst boarders, depending on the make of car (if any) in which one's parents turned up for Speech Day or Sports Day. Among the many Morrises would be the very rare Hispano-Suiza, Rolls or Daimler, and this would provide a boy with prestige for the whole of the next term! My parents made their first visit on an ex-army Indian motorbike and sidecar which my Dad acquired after W.W.1. It took me a long while to live that down!



Figure 20: Mr Newby 1920 (Sullivan)



Figure 19: Mr "Blanco" White 1920 (Sullivan)

I have omitted **Ed. L. Newby**,⁷ who came with "**Blanco**" **White**⁸ left De Aston about 1923 after de-mob from the Army and a 2 year degree course at East London College. Newby taught Chemistry, Physics and Maths and was largely responsible for my getting a Lindsey County Scholarship in

⁷ Edward Lake Newby, born 1898, taught at De Aston 1921 – 1966 – 45 year's service.

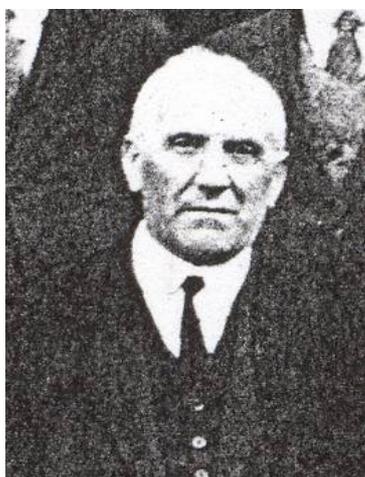
⁸ Is this 1918 - 1919 Victor Culmer White. Born 1897. Appointed as a Science Teacher. ?

1927. He was immensely popular throughout the school and an excellent teacher and sportsman.



**Figure 21: 1927 Miss K. Hill
(Sullivan)**

The rest of the staff comprised the following: **Miss Kathleen Hill.**⁹ (Form 2a, in the classroom behind the swimming bath) Muckhill", as she was unkindly known, was actually a splendid teacher of the lower forms, mainly French but also English literature_etc. She was also a strong disciplinarian and consequently unpopular since, being a female, she couldn't apply any sort of corporal punishment, so her main weapon was "lines", the imposition of 50, 100 or even 200 for serious misdemeanour. She was somewhat unprepossessing, of uncertain age, (though probably quite young) and always seemed to wear some greenish tweed skirt and jacket, and she had favourites in the lower forms.



**Figure 22: Mr "Feet" Timms
1927 (Sullivan)**

G.H." feet" Timms,¹⁰ the Headmaster's elder brother, Form 3, taught drawing and painting (he was a real artist), scripture, English, singing. (He took the four lower forms for an hour every Wednesday morning, mainly in the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas). "Feet" was a lovely ineffectual man, quite the opposite of his energetic younger brother, and was consequently very popular with everyone. I never discovered the origin of his nickname.

⁹ Kathleen Copeman Hill. Born 1885, taught at De Aston 1915 to 1945 – 30 year's service.

¹⁰ G.H.Timms Born 1866, taught De Aston 1917 to 1931 – 14 years service.



**Figure 23: Mr Llewellyn
1920 (Sullivan)**

Llewellyn, "Pflew"¹¹ (Form 4b), a fiery Celt. He left De Aston in 1921 so I had no real contact with him, - he always seemed in a hurry and ran when he could have walked.



**Figure 24: Mr Franks 1927
(Sullivan)**

He was replaced by **Percy "Chink" Franks**,¹² so named because of his slightly slit-eyed appearance. Franks taught Latin throughout the upper school and was terribly thorough and efficient (I can still, at 85, recall fairly accurately the five declensions of nouns and the tenses of the verbs 'to be, have, love, hear, see, (from where do we get the words audio, video, etc?) He was not a popular master but he was highly respected (a master of satire) and feared. In the Fifth we did Virgil's Aeniad for Cambridge School Cert. (Latin was compulsory for entry into University in those days) and he taught Greek to those sixth formers destined for classics at Cambridge.

¹¹ No reference to him in the Staff list.

¹² No reference to him in the Staff list.



Figure 25: Mr H.H. Clews 1927
(Sullivan)

H.H.Clews ¹³(form 4a.) “Clewey” was at once respected, feared, (he could use the edge of a ruler across your fingers with devastating effect) and at the same time highly popular with everyone, mainly because of his sports abilities, (he scored several 50s and was a wizard dribbler.) He became Headmaster after PJ, but I’m uncertain of the date, (1940s or 50s?) Clewey’s forte was History, but he also taught English grammar and literature, again mainly Shakespeare: (in his form I learned Grays’s Elogy off by heart and can still remember large chunks of it.)



Figure 26: Uncomfortable
Cadet 1920 (Sullivan)

Besides these teachers there were two others who operated on a part-time basis:- **Upex**,¹⁴ a recently demobbed army colonel, who taught the over-13s 'drill', i.e. the arts of war, in the Cadet Corps every Friday afternoon in lieu of games. The CC was disbanded in 1924 when 'disarmament' became politically correct, so I only suffered it for one year. The highlight of the C.C. year was supposed to be the annual route march to Bayons Manor during the summer term. We wore ill-fitting army uniforms (the day boys had to wear theirs all day on Fridays - see 1920 photo) which chafed horribly when marching and we had to carry heavy ancient rifles. On arrival at Bayons we were provided with an excellent tea after which we could roam around the grounds and pick apples and pears for an hour before starting on the return journey. Besides C.C., Upex also instructed us in

¹³ Hollis Hudson Clews, born 1892, taught De Aston 1914 to 1957 – 43 years service.

¹⁴ Is not mentioned on the list of teachers.

small-bore shooting in the gym every weekday after breakfast. This was very popular, especially among farmers' sons.



**Figure 27: Anonymous
Music Master of 1920
(Sullivan)**

The **other man's** name I cannot now recall but he taught music mainly the piano, to a handful of boys whose parents thought it worthwhile. I think he does appear among the others in the 1920 school photograph.

BUILDINGS

While on the subject of buildings, I was amazed in '94 at the expansion of the school buildings. In 1928 there was only a 'playground' in front of the refectory, where two or three games of fives could be played up against the wall. There were no buildings beyond the science lab and the gym, apart from the wooden bike shed: and beyond that was an open field as far as the Legsby road, where stood the house of **Mrs Wilson** mother of **Mrs Timms**, (see picture below) and in whose garden had been built the annexes, two wooden huts which each housed a dozen beds as dormitory 'overflows'. Out in front of the lab and the gym was the paddock where we played when out of school. There was a set of goal posts and two or three ad hoc cricket pitches and, after 1924, a grass tennis court.

LINDSEY COUNTY SCHOLARSHIP 1927

Mr Newby was largely responsible for my getting a Lindsey County Scholarship in 1927. I had tried for a scholarship in 1926 when **Jack Batey** son of the printer of the local newspaper (and "the De Astonian) drove me in his father's Jowett each day to Lincoln Technical College where we sat the Exams. "Jock" got one that year and went to

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.

Edinburgh next term to read medicine but I had to wait another year for mine, (worth £75 a year).

I remember receiving the news one hot July afternoon when PJ came to the swimming bath to find me. (Someone took a photograph of the moment, which I enclose.)¹⁵



Figure 28: 1927 July - Swimming Bath (Sullivan)

The swimming bath doesn't seem to have changed very much except that the water is a lot cleaner and I am told, is now heated.

CAMBRIDGE OPEN SCHOLARSHIP 1927

On the strength of my Lindsey scholarship, P.J. decided I should try for a Cambridge Open Scholarship, which several bright boys in the past had won. I went up in the Christmas term of 1927 and stayed in digs near my friend **Marmaduke Swalwell**, (see picture) son of the rector of Linwood, who had gone up to Emmanuel a year previously. I enjoyed dinner in hall every evening with beer in pewter tankards; - I was only 17 and had never tasted the stuff! but the exams were far above my capability - I was after all competing against the whole country, - so that I gave up and walked out after the statutory half hour, only to find out, too late, that I'd badly failed "Little-Go", the Cambridge entrance exam, to my parents' disappointment.

But I enjoyed my week and was thrilled to know that I'd taken my physics practical in the Cavendish, where **J.J.Thomson** had discovered the electron and men like **Rutherford**

¹⁵ Reverse of picture describes Sullivan as being at the centre of the line.

and Niels Bohr had worked: (all three had worked at Manchester University, where I was going to end up instead of Cambridge and in 1929 I attended a Physics Society lecture given by Niels Bohr at which J.J. was the guest of honour and **Sir Lawrence Bragg**, who taught me physics at Manchester, was the chairman.).

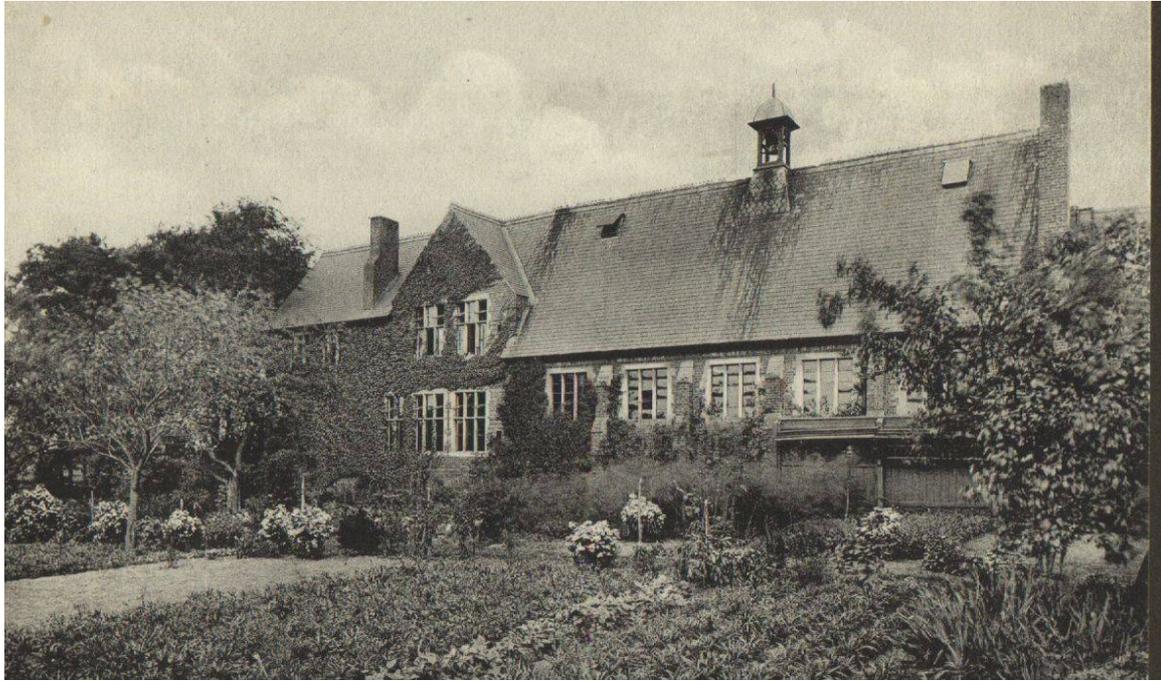


Figure 29: Kitchen Garden (School Collection)

FOOD

Since our thoughts in those days were always on food, I will describe it. By today's standards the diet was execrable. Though there was a **large kitchen garden** in the area behind the gym, we never had a green salad of any kind nor any green vegetable. The weekly menu never changed from 1920 to 1928 and I will try to recall it. First, breakfast at 7.30am, after a half hour period of prep to complete the previous night's work. Monday and Wednesday, porridge with a little watered milk, usually cold, having been put on the plates at 7am. On the side plate was a blob of golden syrup and plates of bread and Marge were set out along the two long tables in the refectory. Tuesday and Friday - corned beef with bread and marge. Thursday and Saturday, - Fish stew, made from a cheap tinned salmon. Sunday, a rasher of bacon with boiled potatoes.

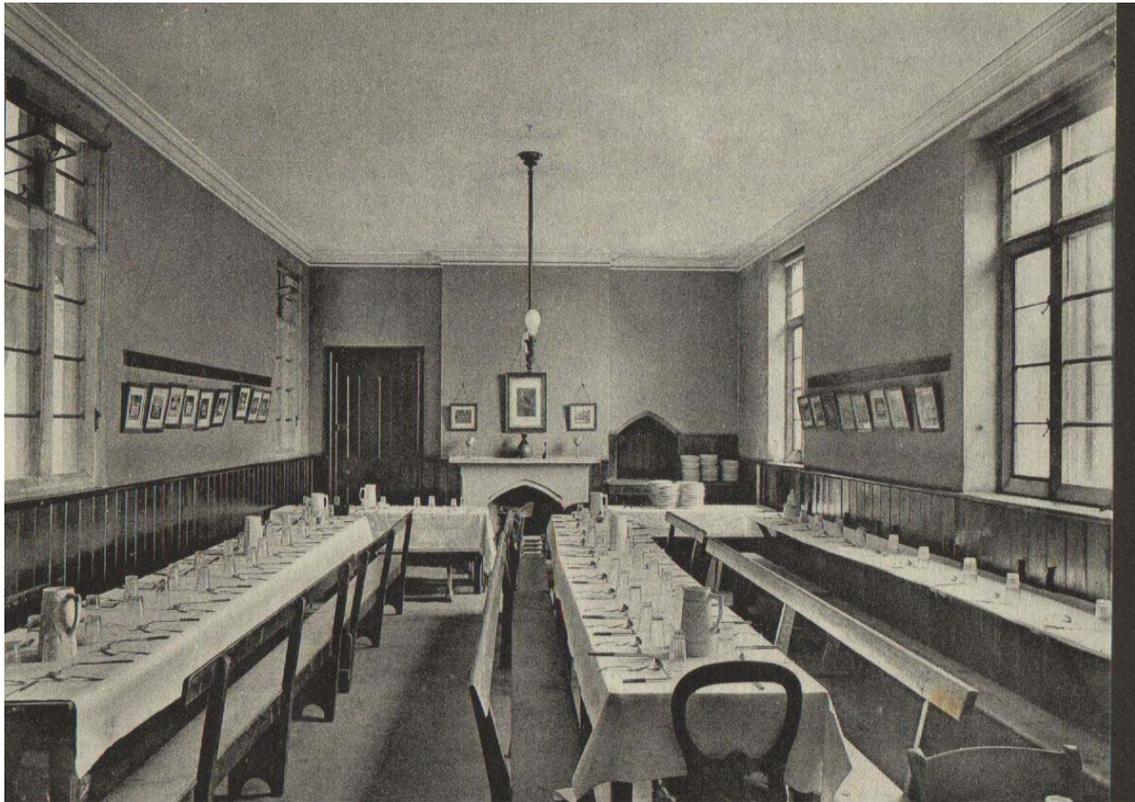


Figure 30: Dining Room 1920s/30s. (School Collection.)

(At the small masters' table near the fireplace, P.J. would preside over a large tureen of bacon, eggs, sausages, etc for Mrs Timms and himself and the duty master for the day. At lunch he ate the same food as we did but he also had a hot dinner in the evenings which we could observe via the French windows of his dining room!) (*Editorial note: the Master's table is visible in this photograph*)

Midday dinner,- Sunday and Thursday; P.J. would carve slices from a huge joint of roast beef, with boiled potatoes and mashed swede. Monday and Friday - cold beef and potatoes. Tuesday and Saturday - minced beef and potatoes. Wednesday - Fish stew again. Puddings were rice, tapioca and 'spotted dick'. We never tasted fruit of any kind. Tea at 5.30pm: School provided only plates of bread and marge (we never had butter). Boys provided their own jam or treacle, which was housed in the Jam Cup board outside the refectory. One could take in to tea other delicacies such as tinned fruit or fish, and the farmers' sons would get home-made pork pies occasionally. These treats were shared among one's close friends and were usually limited to Saturdays after the weekly visit to town. Apart from this school diet, boys survived on their tuck boxes, whose contents were usually exhausted in the first ten days or so of term and only replenished with parcels from home three or four times a term.



Figure 31: Mrs Timms (Sullivan)

The unsatisfactory nature of the diet was reflected in the daily dozen or so boys who went up to the bathroom after breakfast for treatment of boils by **Mrs Timms** who acted as unpaid Matron. She had no medical training and her methods were somewhat basic. On Saturdays, the lunchtime mince was laced with a virulent purgative, so that at bedtime there would be an urgent queue outside the single upstairs W.c. and 'accidents' were not infrequent. A few of the weaker boys had daily doses of cod liver oil or Scott's Emulsion, as prescribed by parents or doctor.

In my time there was at least one outbreak of mumps, scarlet fever, and German measles, the patients being isolated in one of the two annexes on the Legsby Road.

In spite of my protestations however, my parents always replied "Well, you don't look bad on it!" But it was the tuck box which kept us going.

DE ASTON DIALECTS

As a new boy at De Aston one needed quickly to learn the nicknames of all the masters. Some had more than one but this was unusual. The fifth form master, Thomas H.Court, was almost universally known as Bug, on account of his hobby of collecting butterflies. However, for reasons which I was never able to discover, his Christian name of Thomas was sometimes twisted to "Tumus", especially by the lower form boys. There were other strange words one needed to get accustomed to; such as 'Bog', which had nothing to do with Irish swamps! Some of these words seemed to be used mainly by boys from the farming districts of the Fenlands of South Lincolnshire and not by the fishermen's sons from Grimsby and the north. The word 'hesh' meant to thrash or beat someone; thus "I'll hesh you" was commonly used as a threat to fight someone. Complementing this, the word "strunt" roughly meant one's backside, so that "I'll hesh your strunt," meant, equally roughly, "I'll kick your backside".

It was not until I reached the fifth form that an older boy explained to me that these words were part of a mnemonic for the benefit of the eleven-year-olds of Guy Smith's form 2b, making their first acquaintance with Latin verbs. Struggling to remember what came after *sum, es, est*, they had only to recall that *Tumus heshed his strunt!* Well, it sounded a reasonable explanation at the time!

By way of further explanation, Latin was a compulsory subject in those days but farmers had no use for Latin and preferred their sons to learn book-keeping instead, which would be of use in keeping the farm accounts. Most boys disliked Latin but very few were able to escape it in this way. It was compulsory for matriculation and therefore for entry into university.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

There was no regulation school uniform but school caps were de rigeur for going into town on Saturdays for personal shopping, for church on Sundays, for the Sunday afternoon walk (usually over 'the Warren' - now the golf course, or in the Willingham woods,) and as spectators at Matches. For weekday wear, it was suits with collar and tie, (short trousers until you were 15). The maids who made the beds put out a clean collar and a handkerchief on Sundays and Thursdays; a shirt was worn for a week, the collars being detachable in those days. A pair of socks was also made to last a week.



Figure 32: Dorm 2 in 1920s/30s. (School Collection) Known even in the 1990s as “the ice palace”

BATHS

We had one bath per week and as there were only three baths, some had to be taken during morning school. This was not unwelcome, if during a boring Latin lesson, some boy would enter the form room with the request 'Please Sir, may Sullivan go to bath?' It was, I think not until 1925 that metal washbasins and running water were installed in the dorms; prior to that date, we all washed in cold water from china jugs, often frozen over during the winter terms.

HEATING

There was no heating in the dorms and the masters encouraged us to sleep with .all the windows open! Heating in the form rooms was confined to a single open fireplace, the fires being lit around 6.30am by the three male staff. We had half an hour's prep each morning before breakfast and the rooms never had time to warm up by nine. There was always a rush on the first day of term to 'bag' a desk as near as possible to the fire, for obvious reasons.

After meals we were not allowed into the form rooms, but had to occupy the time before the start of lessons by playing fives up against any convenient wall or join in a game of

cricket or soccer on the paddock. The only way of keeping warm in winter time was to sneak into the bootroom, where **Sid Smith**, the boot boy would be sitting in front of a small hot stove peeling a tin bathful of potatoes for lunch. In the early morning before 8.30am, Sid would be busy cleaning all the boots, left there the previous evening when we changed into 'house shoes' before evening prep, 7.30 to 9.00pm.

BEDTIME

After 9pm all junior boys (up to Form 3, i.e. 13) went to bed. The rest joined them at 9.30 but prefects retired at 10 pm. The duty master, who arrived at 7.0am to get us up, would make a final tour of inspection and ensure that dorm lights (a single bat's-wing gas flame) were out before leaving the premises shortly after ten. On the subject of lights, there was no domestic electricity in Market Rasen before the arrival of the National Grid in 1933. Each form room had a single central gas light comprising four small mantles; all other lights, in the dorms, bathrooms corridors, etc were naked bat's-wing gas flames, lit by a match. The outside toilet facilities, an extension on the end of the gym. Comprised a urinal and three W.C's, a further three being added around 1924. Inside as mentioned, was the single upstairs W.C. adjacent to the two bath rooms.

POCKET-MONEY

On Saturdays, at lunchtime P.J. would issue pocket money. The term's supply was sent to him by parents and controlled by his 'bankbook'. In answer to one's name, one called out the amount one required, seldom more than half a crown, otherwise he would demand to know what reckless expense one was contemplating. Besides this, there was always a statutory six pence to ensure that those whose money had run out would be able to purchase a stamp for their letter home and have a penny for church collection on Sunday.

DOWN-TOWN

After Saturday lunch we were allowed to go downtown for one hour to make all necessary purchases for the week; these were usually no more than a comic or cheap magazine and as much confectionery as the money allowed. On returning to school, we had to answer roll-call after which we were confined to 'bounds', i.e. the Legsby Road junction in one direction and the 'White House' on Willingham Road in the other.

SIXTH-FORM

Becoming a sixth-former and a prefect in the autumn term of 1925 gave rise to certain extra privileges. Firstly, we had a room of our own, the Prefects' Room, adjacent to Big

School (Form 3), which was strictly out of bounds to all other boys; even masters would give a small deferential knock before entering, (but not P.J.). This room contained not only our personal belongings, books, etc. but also all the sports gear,- cricket bats, pads, stumps and bags for transporting it to away matches. We were responsible for maintaining the gear. e.g. mending punctures in burst footballs, oiling bats, etc and checking its return after games. We also drew up the teams for all afternoon games and posted them on the school notice board. Among less orthodox duties were to detect such heinous offences as smoking, (usually by sniffing around the bike shed) or dealing with cases of bullying coming to our attention. The method here was often to give the injured party a short instruction in the art of boxing and generally fortify his courage. and then make him confront his tormentor In the gym in a properly supervised three or four round contest. Though these occasions were infrequent, it was surprising how often the bully came off worst and was thereafter cured of his fault.

Apart from the relative comfort, warmth and privacy of our own room, we could supplement our diet by obtaining slices of bread from the kitchen and making toast in front of our fire during the hours of prep, occasionally being able to coat it with butter instead of the eternal 'marge'.

SUNDAYS

We remembered the four Sundays in Advent by reciting the following little quatrain

*“Unbutton One,
Unbutton Two,
Cock up Hats
and Chew in the Pew.”*

On Sundays we wore our best suits and attended Matins in the Parish Church. We marked **Advent One** by ostentatiously leaving undone the bottom button of our waistcoats all day and on **Advent Two**, the bottom two buttons were left undone.

Every Sunday the hundred-odd boarders at De Aston would march down to 11 o'clock Matins in a long crocodile, two-by-two, headed by the senior prefects and sixth formers, the rear being brought up by the ten-year-olds, accompanied by the headmaster and his

wife. On the return journey on **Advent Three (Cock up hats)**, as each pair passed the Legsby Road junction marking the limit of "school bounds "in that direction, they threw up their caps in the air and replaced them back-to-front for the remaining distance back to the school gates. (This was, of course, long before the invention of baseball caps!)

To be spotted eating sweets in church was, rightly, regarded as a fairly heinous offence, usually warranting 'three of the best' in the headmaster's study. So the practice was rarely indulged in, since the De Aston boys' pews in the south aisle were under easy observation from the nave and north choir stalls. However, for reasons which go back to the very distant past, this prohibition was lifted on **Advent Four** and every boy, from the prefects downwards, provided himself with four to eight ounces of toffees or whatever to last him through the hour-long service. The whole of the regular congregation, including the masters who attended, were fully aware of this relaxation of protocol and would watch stolidly as a hundred-odd pairs of jaws steadily masticated their way through some forty or so pounds of assorted confectionery in the certain knowledge that no penal retribution would follow to spoil the occasion!

On Sunday evenings after P.J. 's sermon. at around 9pm we would have to take the "mail' down town to the post office. Every boy had to write a letter home, on Sunday afternoon and these were all read by P.J. during the 'prep' period, (when we could read a library book instead of 'swotting'). He would order a re-write if the letter was badly written or contained anything he disliked. such as any criticism of the school or a request for money or food parcels; (such requests had to be inserted surreptitiously into the envelope when he wasn't looking!) The trip to the post office provided opportunities to meet up with various town girls in the ill-lit side streets and alleyways of Market Rasen and it was then that our real-life education began!

JAMES NETTLESHIP

I perhaps should mention a man who exerted a tremendous influence on the school during the twenties. **Mr James Nettleship** who was chairman of the Governors. A large, stout man, he headed a local firm of auctioneers and valuers and was frequently to be seen riding through the town on a beautiful chestnut pony and wearing a wide-brimmed Stetson hat, smoking a huge cigar. He was a great character and always took the chair on Speech Day praising the school, the staff and the boys making everyone proud to be

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.

associated with De Aston. He it was, incidentally, who was primarily responsible for the establishment of the race course at Market Rasen in the mid-twenties.

Robert Sullivan, De Aston School, Market Rasen, 1920 - 1928.



Figure 33: Fisher 1927 (Sullivan)

In my last year at De Aston, 1927/28, there was only one other boarder prefect. **S.H.Fisher**, (see picture) who went on to London University and there were no other boys left in the school who had been there when I arrived in 1920.

RESTROSPECTIVE

Looking back, it was a somewhat Spartan life compared with what I saw of De Aston on my brief visit in June 1994 but I've always been grateful to the school and the masters for the education I received there. Teaching methods were so different and in my opinion so much more effective than today's. Discipline was so much stricter and we accepted it as necessary and beneficial and most of

us thereby had a tremendous sense of pride in belonging to a school such as De Aston was in those days. I feel very critical of modern education, of what I perceive as the slackness and lack of pride and respect; indeed of moral responsibility in many schools resulting, I am sure, from the withdrawal of corporal punishment for misdemeanour (a fundamental mistake and one reason for the escalation in juvenile crime!)

We revelled in that sense of pride at the close of Speech Day when we sang 'Gaudeamus igitur' and the school song., composed by an old boy, Haydn Wood, and concluding with

"Respice! Aspice! Prospice!
Floreat Scola Thomae De Aston!"

(Do they still sing it?)

Robert Sullivan, 1920 - 1928.

Broughton Astley

Leicestershire.



Figure 34: Snillman & Sullivan June 1928 (Sullivan)



Figure 35: Spillman and Sullivan June 1928 (Sullivan)



Figure 36: De Aston School Honour Board