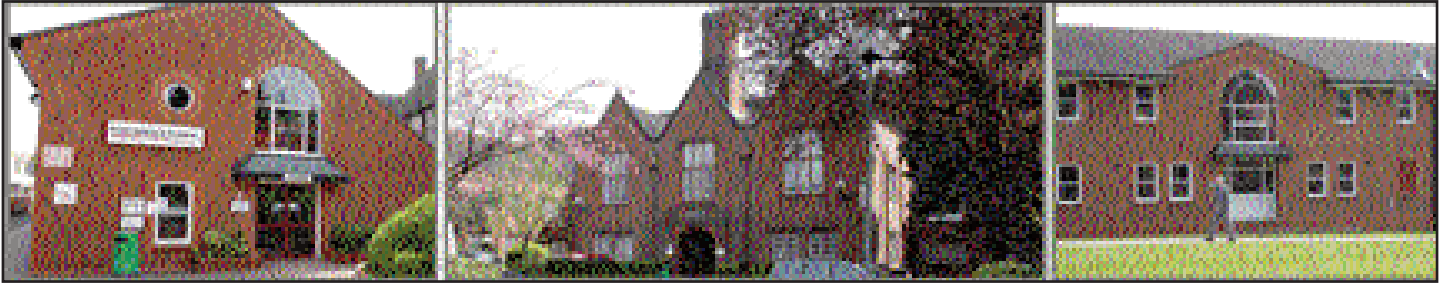


# e-NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2018  
Editors: Linda Jane and Peter Luck



For Members, Family and Friends of the  
**OLD WEALDEN ASSOCIATION**

## School gardens ? Did you have one ?



*By Linda Jane*

AT the end of my first committee meeting, getting our things together, and looking out into the dark of Heather's beautiful and hard-worked garden, a little group of us were chatting about the pleasure to be had in just being outside, and in particular in having a love of gardening in common. I said that I had recently realised that it must have been the school gardens that allowed me to get to know people in other form groups, who I may never otherwise have become close to. These people remain the dearest of friends, and we still all go out and play in gardens.

Heather and Rosemary, though, looked at each other in surprise at this, and I think it was Rosemary who said that in all her time with OWA she had never heard a mention of there

being school gardens. After a pause, she said: 'We had shelters of course!' My motivation for joining up and getting involved was precisely for this sort of conversation, and I went off in awe of the length of service and richness of experience that as an association we have together. Rosemary won't mind me saying, I'm sure, that her service on the committee is forty years so far.

So, does anyone else remember the school gardens, all shared I believe? It would be great to find out when and by whom they were started. I suspect Clare Pope, but equally it could have been Mr Crowle-Ellis, to follow his theme of weeds to roses. In my case, I doubt it went further than nasturtiums, French marigolds, and some of my dad's mesembryanthemums, which were like little bright jewels in the day, and closed right up at night.

*Marian writes:*

### **Harrow Weald U6 Class of 68 Reunion 2018**

We have about 40 of the year group in full support of joining up for a Class 50th anniversary landmark reunion in 2018. We have a confirmed date, time and venue for the reunion this year: Wednesday 10th October 2018, 12 – 4pm, "The Phoenix", Palace Street, SW1E 5JA (Victoria)

If you were one of us and have not yet been contacted- please get in touch with one of the Committee: Geoff Iverson, Keith Martin, Annette Miller (née Sewell), Fred Ross, Stephen Simpson.

[HWGS2018Reunion@outlook.com](mailto:HWGS2018Reunion@outlook.com)

Welcome to this e-version Newsletter which I had hoped would reach you before the Reunion!



If you have any material which we could use in future Newsletters please send to Linda or me – email addresses in the paper version which came to you in February.

– Peter Luck

# A REAL BUZZ !

by Linda Jane



Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018 was characterised, as usual, by a hall full of smiling faces, and the constant hum of animated chatter. There was a real buzz as old friends met up and showed their delight in seeing each other in the flesh, as it were. Of course it is our own contemporaries who are particularly close to our hearts, because we shared the day to day experience of being at Harrow Weald; but in that hall that Saturday you could strike up a conversation with anyone, any year badge, learn something, and make a new friend.

We did the usual things: listened when required, said thank you, sang heartily, shared an excellent lunch, browsed the superb display of memorabilia, all intertwined with the flow of conversation and lots of laughter.

We also had some particular thanks to give this year, after many years of service to us. Kay, who organised it all, writes about this 'inside'. In 'assembly', Chris spoke for all of us when he thanked Tony for yet again managing our high quality lunch, and generally looking after all our culinary needs from arrival to departure, always with a smile. Coffee and tea on tap, all day.....

If you didn't/couldn't come this year, we missed you. Keith had organised blown up copies of your messages of good wishes and apology, and displayed them around the hall, a popular idea which will be repeated. If you can, come next time. It was a brilliant day!

**Pictured above: the 30s and 40s**

**Photo by Keith Mayes**

# Farewell to College Head of Security Dermot Corr

**D**URING THE many years that we have been holding our reunions we have gratefully relied on the College's security team to provide us with security on the day and to support us with practical matters such as laying out the tables and chairs, unlocking the doors and raising the barriers to the car park. The ever faithful piano which Mr Becker used to play gave up the ghost two years ago but until then you may have spotted members of the team shifting it into position ready for the School Song. Most important of all was Dermot Corr, Head of College Security. We have relied heavily on Dermot for the smooth running of the building for as long as any of us can remember and some members of the Committee have been around a long time! Therefore, when we heard recently that Dermot is soon to leave the College we were keen to present him with a gift as a token of our gratitude. Unfortunately it was not possible to present the gift to Dermot at our last Reunion because, although he has often been around at our reunions, he could not be present at this one. Below is a photo of two Dartington glasses engraved with the School logo which we have given to him. It goes without saying that we are going to miss him a great deal.

– Kay Haig



**Have YOU  
got something to say ?  
... a Memory  
... a Story  
... a Picture**

***Why not send your material  
for use in one of our  
Newsletters ?***

**Please send to Linda at**

**ljane1948@gmail.com**

**Or to Peter at**

**p.luck123@btinternet.com**

## From Chris Chapman (née Richards) 1960, to introduce "The Black Path"

I was invited by our brave new co-editor to share a piece I wrote some time ago whilst in my middle years.

Asked at an evening class to write on the subject of "Change" and, going through much upset and turmoil in my life at that time, my thoughts instead turned to my childhood and to my "special place" in Wales. Do you have a "special place" from your childhood? Somewhere you escaped to every school summer holidays? Or was I just lucky?

Looking back from the viewpoint of happy and contented later years, I feel that I was so fortunate in having that life-enriching experience. After all, our memories are what make us the people we are today.

# The Black Path

by Chris Chapman (née Richards, 1960)

**U**P THE Black Path! Oh what magic in those simple words. Memories of my second-home in Wales amongst the bracken-covered mountain dens of my childhood. A place of wild abandon, a picture of sepia coloured contentment. Freedom. To a town child it was truly paradise.

Below the path were untended fields of chicken hutches, ramshackle and makeshift. Far beneath these, the river; flashing brightly over the shining pebbles as it made its way down the valley. Not much more than a wide stream really. Safe enough for the boys to play Tarzan, swinging wildly from the overhanging trees; "Jane" occasionally getting a look in! But not after the sodden sandals incident when the rope swung too low. Auntie didn't approve.

Between the chicken field and the river ran the railway. A typical country station it was; to cross from one platform to the other you simply walked over the track – no safety barriers in those days. Sunday school outings to Aberavon left from there; steam trains jam-packed with smut covered childish faces practically tumbling out of the carriage windows in excited anticipation.

### My Love !

But the Black Path was my love. It led you up onto the mountain, a magical place of bogs and streams, where you could make your own earthquake just by flexing your knees, or fill your wellie boots to overflowing in the little icy waterfalls. A wild place inhabited by plants with exotic names – fritillary, compact rush and bog asphodel. On the top stood an old ruined chapel, roofless and open to the elements, surrounded by land pebbled with rocks and stones and carcasses of sheep whose eyes the crows had pecked out. A compelling bleak and barren landscape, hungry for a child's fertile imagination.

### Memories !

Middle aged, I sit and ponder on those times when I was so free and happy. Nostalgia overwhelms me and I long for the sounds of the early morning cock crowing and even the geese which terrified both me and the whole terrace. I long for the smells of the wild honeysuckle up the lane and the carbolic soap from my auntie's scullery. Are childhood memories the cliché they appear to be?

I am told that the village has changed and why should it not? There are new bungalows with all mod cons below the old street with its outside lavatories. The Co-op on the corner where the whole village used to shop is now a rather tasteful hotel and restaurant. The shabby working-men's drinking place is still there, though with a cleaner, sweeter smelling image these days.

Of course the railway has been long gone – it failed to survive the Beeching era. For years the old track lay derelict, eventually being deprived of even the comfort of its worn down sleepers. Cars run along there now – a brand new motorway up to the valleys. The colliery around the mountain has disappeared as if it had never been; even the slag tips have been made safe and grassed over.

But the Black Path still remains, mostly overgrown with grass and ferns since only the occasional farm vehicle uses it now. Today's children have different, more sophisticated lives and so the path lies empty and forgotten.

I yearn to go back but know I will not. For I too have changed. A child's sense of wonder and delight has been lost along the path to maturity. My thoughts are too well preserved in my box of memories! And I will leave them there. For while people and places change, memories never do.

# HILLMAN MINX IIC CONVERTIBLE

Reg. No: 601DLO 1962

By Heather Bickerton (1940)

I FELL in love with the Hillman Minx IIC convertible when, as part of a sales team, we sold her to the first lady owner who took her on holiday to Italy in 1962. In 1964 the car came back to the garage in part-exchange when I was able to buy her.

This replaced my 1947 Austin 8 – what a transition. I called her IDLO and she was my everyday car being used for shopping, work and holidays. I would not leave her in a supermarket car park now.

Years later an old school friend asked me: "Do you belong to a car club?" I did not understand this but he explained that it was a car of interest. Eventually I found and enrolled in the Hillman Owners Car Club in about 1982. Later I also belonged to the Hillman, Comma and Karrier Clubs.

With these clubs we attended many Classic Car shows. One at Ryton-on-Dunsmore (where IDLO was made) to celebrate 100 years of motoring when we travelled up with two other Minx convertibles in convoy which turned many heads. From the many Rootes cars on show there IDLO was selected to join a motorcade to drive to Coventry City centre. This journey was made with Police motorbike outriders who ushered us through red lights and round the city centre twice before parking in the pedestrian square adjacent to Coventry Cathedral for public viewing.

Another great occasion was in 1992 when we were selected to take part in a 9-mile motorcade organised by Marlboro and *Daily Mail* to promote

the Ideal Home and Car Show. This ran from Birmingham city centre to the NEC led by a 1908 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost which is now in the Beaulieu Motor Museum. In this parade were vehicles such as James Bond's Aston Martin, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Mr Bean's Mini which was driven backwards! Cheering crowds lined the whole route. We were then entertained to a Champagne reception and given tickets for the two shows being held at the NEC the following weekend.

A tennis friend, Douglas May, told me of the formation of the Watford Classic Vehicle Club so I went to the inaugural meeting at Garston and joined. This has given great interest, pleasure and amazing friendships. In 2007 at Andrew Greenwood's Alexandra Palace Show IDLO won best Rootes car. This was the only indoor show IDLO had been to and to win when the Hillman Owners and the Hillman Imp Clubs were competing was amazing! With the Watford Club we have been in three films which have been incredibly interesting.

With Watford Classics we have enjoyed 12 yearly trips to the Isle of Wight where we motored to many places of interest researched and led by Dawn and Peter Watson. The Vectris Classic Car Club always made us very welcome and invited us to show our cars with them at the Old Gaffers Festival at Yarmouth.

I have enjoyed 56 years with IDLO who has 92,931 on the clock. Who knows? We might make 100,000.



# The Pennine Way

by Ollie Kingsland

268 miles later, crashed outside the Boarder Hotel – Kirk Yetholm, the official end of the Pennine Way, sipping my free half pint of Tyneside Blonde the incredible journey flashed by me. 15 days previously we were sat in the Old Nag’s Head – Edale seemingly ready for what lay ahead minus the quadruple sized mental and physical muscles! Oh, and we were dry then! After I woke on the fourth day following the late-night pitch at the ‘recommended sheltered campsite’ I came to the conclusion that my opinion on these peculiar campsites, that didn’t require any money or booking, commonly referred to as ‘wild camping’ the only feature seemed to be the amazing hidden bog which overnight left half a foot of water in the bottom of your tent, bag and boots! These first five days were the most complicated, tiring, emotional and painful of them all, every stride I could feel my muscles screaming and breaking as they pushed my drenched body plus my 20kg bag through the harsh wind, rain and hail. Everlasting ranting and anger kept us half cheerful and moving as we all took our turn at upsetting the weather or the manufacturers of our ‘waterproof’ equipment, alas, the words never did hurt them!

Following these first struggled days I was amazed how quickly my muscles strengthened and my mind set changed, once the walking became significantly

easier the enjoyment came in and I realised how much of a gift it was being able to spend time crossing through all these stunning national parks. The walking meant we could observe so much detail over the landscape like rivers, streams and tarns cutting through the everlasting species of trees and plants with nature and wildlife smiling in its happiest habitats and conditions. Even the relentless Pennine conditions could not fend off the love for the scenery and after a day of long, wet and tiresome walking the feeling of either drinking a warm mug of cocoa made on a gas stove or nestling in one of the cosy pubs along the route really made it. One of the days I would like to highlight is the final, sickness and fatigue littered us, so we originally planned to split the leg into two days. However, miraculously we were gifted with sunshine (the first and last clear sunshine over the 15 days!) and the wonders of the Scottish hills and landscape pushed us to complete the 27 miles! It was such an amazing experience and I have tales and stories which I will remember for a long time! Thank you for your kind donation which really did make a difference to keeping my bag weight low, however wet and sodden it got!

Thank you for reading and the next question is...

**What’s next?**



*... and more !*



*Welcoming smiles !*



*Tuckshop*



*Who left the window open ?*

# THE BEST OF TIMES ?

By Ivan Jones (Harrow Weald 1947-1954)

**M**Y father, Albert Edward Jones, was born in London in 1901. There were seven children. His father was a hansom cab driver who, sadly, died of drink plunging the whole family into the Workhouse. They were rescued when my grandmother remarried a widower with two sons who worked at the tram depot as a tram cleaner. My father eventually went to sea and ended up in the Royal Navy which he joined on the same day that the Battle of Jutland was fought. His older brother, Ernest, had just joined the 17th London Regiment, and within twelve months was killed at Passchendael in September 1917 making my father the head of the family which he took seriously. His service record shows he originally enlisted "for the duration of the hostilities" but at the end of the War, on the advice of his mother, he signed on for a further 13 years and spent many years on the China station. His mother advised the naval career because of the uncertain nature of employment in the 1920's but my mother said it was because she enjoyed the steady payments from him which enabled her to keep herself in the level of gin drinking to which she was accustomed !

My father married Agnes in 1923. They had both been to the same Elementary School in Burns Road in Willesden and my father said they were "childhood sweet-hearts", something my mother never confirmed! They were both highly intelligent but left school at the age of 12 with no chance of anything much in life. It is said that my father wanted a large family, but how this was supposed to happen on a sailor's pay and with most of his time spent in the Far East, I'm not sure ! My mother managed a series of laundry shops and acquired some savings. In the Navy Albert mastered telegraphy and finally left the Navy via Chatham dockyard in 1931 at the height of the Depression !

## First Job

Radio was the thing of the future and initially he got a job with a firm manufacturing radios and located in one of the old pavilions left over from the Empire Exhibition of 1924 and located in Wembley. Sadly they were a bunch of crooks, and one night the sky over Wembley was lit up by an enormous blaze as they set fire to the place and claimed the insurance. Albert was suspected of being one of the gang and was shadowed for weeks by detectives but ended up being a key prosecution witness at the Old Bailey's No. 1 Court because he knew that most of the radios in the place were really only empty cases ! Long periods of unemployment followed, interspersed with odd jobs like selling encyclopaedias and serving as a mortuary attendant at Park Royal Hospital until he became a postman at Harrow Post Office. His Naval Service Record was exemplary and he exchanged one of the King's uniforms for another service organised in ranks. He served faithfully.

Thus by 1935 my parents moved out of rented accommodation in Kenton and, having put down a 10

shillings deposit, moved into a brand new Ideal Homes semi-detached bungalow in Borrowdale Avenue. It was the smallest style on the estate and cost £650. As an 'Avenue' they had been promised trees, but as my mother never ceased to point out, none were ever planted ! To celebrate they had me ! I was born in Queen Charlotte's Hospital in London. It was a difficult birth. My mother was 37. Her health was undermined and she never fully recovered. So much for a large family !

My father was a keen gardener and could paint and decorate and mother's savings paid for furniture and Dad's 3-speed Hercules bike (£3) to go to work on. They created a nice home but was this a good time to be born? The birth-rate reached an all-time low in 1932. High levels of unemployment and the worsening International climate discouraged many. Post Office workers had received paid holidays by this time and my parents believed in a week in Southend or Margate. At the age of nearly four in late August 1939, to me, the illuminations at Southend were magic. And then, one night, they all went out. It was a blackout practice. We returned home on Saturday 2nd September and on Sunday morning Dad's lawn mower fell silent like everyone else's as we learned we were at war with Germany again after only 20 years of peace.

I suppose our War was just typical of many and not as bad as some. Albert dug up his back garden to grow vegetables, but after a short time in the ARP putting out the odd incendiary bomb that dropped in our road, at the age of 39 he was recalled to Chatham Dockyard in 1940 to resume his Naval Service. Initially he was transferred to Portsmouth and was there when the Town and the Dockyard was bombed to hell. He was trained on Radar and spent the rest of the war in a sleepy Sussex village in the Manor House, which had been requisitioned, training other sailors in the use of this secret weapon. My mother and I had no idea what he did. It broke my contact with him for five vital years and meant that I became very close to my mother, Evacuation was considered but turned down. I was relieved because other kids up our road who went away came back with terrible Welsh accents ! Every night for five years I slept in our indoor Morrison shelter. Every night during the Blitz my mother sat in her armchair alone reading her library book, smoking small cigarettes and sucking peppermints. Only occasionally would she leave her own bed and join me in the shelter if the raid was particularly close or noisy. I think most of the noise was caused by our own anti-aircraft guns ringing Bentley Priory (the HQ of Fighter Command, although I did not know that at the time). I had a good collection of shrapnel.

## Not a good start

I made a very poor start at school. Although married women with children were not expected to work, now Albert was once again on service pay (and no overtime!), Agnes needed to work in order to keep up the



mortgage payments of £3 pounds, 14shillings per month. Belmont School had been requisitioned by the RAF so I was first enrolled at Stanburn School en route for Mum's laundry shop in Edgware, but soon I was transferred to the school in Edgware adjacent to the shop. It didn't work out because I was a sickly child and had measles, mumps and chicken pox one after the other. Work had to be abandoned. My childless God-parents subsidised us throughout the War. I eventually restarted my education minus my tonsils at the grim old school in Grant Road, Wealdstone. Finally I went to Belmont School once the RAF vacated it. I was behind with everything but the teaching was good in spite of large classes and by the age of nine I was reading to the class. I was really upset in the last year at Juniors to find I was going to be in Mr Keen's class. I had never been in a man's class and he was in charge of caning in the school! However, once you were in his class he was very fair and even had a sense of humour! It was the top class and he got a good proportion of us through the dreaded 11+ exams. John Biggs and Joan Sutton (née Beadle) were among this number.

### New thinking

Educational thinking had moved on since our parents' time and it had been realised that the fee-paying upper classes did not have a monopoly of intelligence and the country could no longer afford to waste talent. The leaving age needed to be raised to 16 as soon as possible so that everyone would have a chance to take Public Exams – the gateway to the professions and higher education. One pre-War report had suggested that children fell into three broad categories – the academically gifted, those with practical skills, and those with no particular skills at all. Grammar schools already existed, and Technical Schools were growing in numbers. The Government therefore ordered Local Authorities to build more schools, and in Middlesex in 1933 Harrow Weald County Grammar School came into existence. The 11+ exams were said not to be a pass/fail affair but a means of directing children to the right sort of school to suit their "age, aptitude and ability" as the timely 1944 Education Act put it. Grammar Schools for the Academic, Technical Schools for the Practical and 'Modern' Schools to provide a good general education for the Average Citizen. Modern was a fairly limp suggestion to replace the old Senior Elementary title! All the schools had a job to do and were to have 'parity of esteem', – but we all know what happened! Selection was not perfect and by the 1960's many considered that the whole system was too socially divisive. Be that as it may, those of us who 'passed' in 1947 had choices to make!

Should I go to Harrow County School for Boys, or Harrow Weald? I think I put Harrow County first largely because it was marginally easier to bus to! Thank God I went to Harrow Weald! I would never have survived in an all boys environment of rugby boots and cadet forces. Co-education was so progressive and so right. I progressed well except in PE where the feared Mr Hawtrey could only muster 'Fair Only' on my report. The education was progressive and liberal and I really benefitted from after-school activities like the Junior Drama Club (Mr

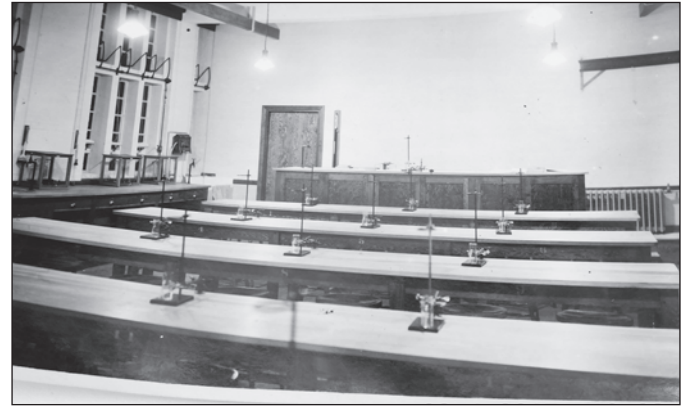
Thompson), Choir (Miss Pyke) and best of all, the Senior Debating Society (Mr Halfpenny – 'Shove') of which I was elected President in my last year in 1953. Thinking back to those far off times there is no doubt that the vast majority of our teachers were of middle class origin and we were mostly working class kids. I was quite vocal but well remember at the end of an O-Level History lesson being stopped by the very refined Mr Crowley who pointed out that the word was pronounced 'railway' and not 'rilewey'! They did their best to eliminate our Middlesex Twang and to introduce us to higher things which led some critics of the system to say it produced divisions between us and the other kids up the street and even with our parents! We were to become "traitors to our class". Really? I have never felt that. I was just grateful to the 44 Act. The great thing about that Act was that it was passed by the Wartime Coalition Government. Education was not the Party Political Football that it so often seems to be these days. I had no ideas of staying on beyond 16 but the School advised it, and I had no ideas of University either but again, 'Shove' really pushed it. Although generous grants were available parents would still face on-going expense, so what did mine think about it?

Perhaps one of the biggest apparent contradictions in my father's life was that although no-one had been more fiercely loyal and willing to obey orders in the Navy, in civilian life he embraced Socialism and was a very active Trade Unionist in the UPW. Perhaps he was able to draw a distinction between service life where life and death decisions require immediate orders and unquestioning obedience. There is no time to hold a committee meeting in the middle of a battle! But in civilian life questions can be asked. In our house, politics was a source of conflict because my mother was an archetypal example of a working class Tory – surely a contradiction in terms? Having lived in London and witnessed first hand the dangerous public disorder of the General Strike in 1926 she believed that only the upper classes were fit to be in charge and ordinary folk should leave it to their superiors! My father would have none of it. He passionately believed in Beveridge and the Welfare State and was prepared to fight for fairer shares for all of us. So, yes, he was prepared to support my continued education and I went on to gain a Degree and a Teaching Diploma and to have a reasonably successful career mostly enjoyed as a Senior Tutor in the Country's pioneer Sixth Form College in Luton, established in 1966. There is no comparison between the fulfilling life that I have enjoyed and the deprived and hard lives that my parents' generation experienced. This, you will gather is the main reason for my penning this article. Surely there can be no question that those of us who can call ourselves Old Wealdens lived at the best of times? Brexit notwithstanding, I worry that future generations may not be as lucky as we were?

PS: – Sadly, although my father had worked hard to see that the opportunities were there for me, in the end he was jealous of me and considered we had all had it too easy. He was said to be proud of me, but he was never able to say it to me personally.



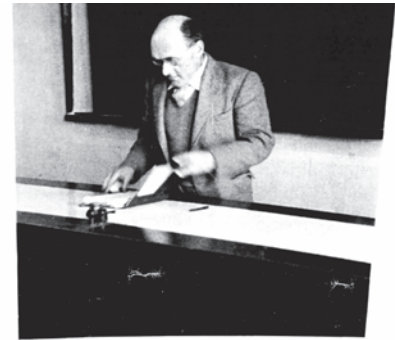
*The 'keep-fit' room !*



*Science Lab*



*Lab-coats for some !*



*I'd rather be out reffing* 29.4.2017 10:30

*'Shove' at it !*



*That iconic brickwork !*



*More red brickwork – and windows.*