

## WALTER STANLEY PORTER (HON OF)



Walter Stanley Porter  
1955–1971

Stanley Porter was a Founder and subsequently an Exhibitor of Rugby School. Gaining a Warwickshire County Scholarship he entered Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he graduated with Honours in 1931.

Teaching experience followed through temporary posts at Malvern College, Loretto and Sedburgh and three years at Trent College where, besides conducting the Science Department, he was an Assistant Housemaster, Librarian, and Commander of the O.T.C.

Invited to join the staff of Felsted School in 1936, he subsequently took over the Science Department and the command of the C.C.F. gaining the award of T.D. and the soubriquet of 'Gallop Major' because in that rank he conducted field exercises on horseback. After eight years' service at Felsted he moved, in 1944, to Radley College (then, as a wartime measure, combined with Eastbourne College) as Head both of the Science Department and the Board of Studies. Here he ran the Signals Section of the C.C.F.

When, with Mrs Porter, he came to Framlingham in September, 1955 - the first Science Headmaster the School had had - he was not slow to recognise and express admiration for the aims and achievements of his predecessor, who in the straightening circumstances of the war and its aftermath had effected for the College more than survival.

The Magazine, apparently surprised that a change of leadership could be made with complete smoothness, and while remarking 'inevitable reforms' and observing that a wholesome breath of fresh air could easily blow up a gale and that the bristles of a new broom could be uncommon hard, offered a few congratulatory words to those who control our destinies, in thanks for the measured serenity which has characterised the current term: the School, declared the Editorial, had been subjected to no shocks: activities had pursued an even and successful course. And no doubt they had. Music Club *Notes* recorded meetings of gramophone sessions

in the Headmaster's drawing-room: Chapel *Notes* recorded Mrs Porter's kindness in providing and arranging flowers.

When Stanley Porter's Headmastership began he and the Governors found that aspirations for the College were clouded, if not threatened, by problems which had to be resolved before progress could be made, and since it was not always in their power to effect a resolution they often had to go through the irksome process of waiting for other powers, usually the Ministry of Education and the Direct Grant Department, to declare their hand.

Independence (which, of course, entailed the abandonment of the Grant), a very extensive building plan and the necessity for an increase in fees were inter-related.

Among the items more palatably to be reckoned with were the expectations arising from the Emile Moreau bequest - though at this time the fund was still blocked by legal complexities which could be resolved, it seemed, only by costly litigation; there was, too, good reason to suppose that Francis Otto Ziegele (1910-17), manager to an East India merchant of some standing, had in mind to settle a substantial sum on the College.

An interesting, almost bizarre, footnote might be added: twenty-seven years after this decision was made the Education Correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* reported that more than 21,000 parents were to be mobilised by a newly-formed group to fight Labour's plans to abolish the country's 2,600 independent schools if returned to power - 'Labour intends to scrap charitable status, and put V.A.T. on fees. Eventually it wants to phase out all fee-paying schools ...'

The new cricket pavilion, gift of the S.O.F., was officially opened by His Grace the Duke of Norfolk on the Whitsun Speech Day in 1957. It had been arranged that the O.F. match should be of two innings. It began on the Saturday (a day, as the Magazine ungraciously put it, interrupted by prize-giving and the opening of the new pavilion) and carried on in the Whit Monday tradition. Incessant rain ruined the second day's play. Numerous exhibitions offered alternative entertainment.

It happily fell that V.G. Bromage, all-round sportsman, was President of the S.O.F. in this year. He it was who presented the pavilion to the Governors on behalf of the Society. Sir Frederick Minter, Governor and O.F., accepted the gift. The Duke, cutting the symbolic ribbon, declared the building open. He said it gave him great pleasure to do so in such a lovely setting and to think of the fun and companionship, 'the hum and the ring of the ball on the bat', that would go with it: it is for that that cricket was invented, and it is in that spirit that cricket must be played'. He asked the Headmaster to fit in just one more half holiday for just one more game of cricket, and, 'if the games master considers the standard sufficiently high', proposed to send a bat and a ball to the batsman and bowler selected at the end of the season.

Between '59 and early '64 Shooting went through a difficult period, though not everything about it was discouraging. The success of the Old Boys' team in the Public School 'Veterans' competition in '61 and again in '63 was an inspiration as was the marksmanship of W.D.J. Pank (1956-61), who 'never wasted a shot' in the '61 Ashburton Competition, and J.A.F. Ford (1958-62), who a year later helped the VIII to reach 11th place out of 102 entrants. Full-bore shooting was limited because the War Office persisted in 'holding back supplies from their vast stocks of weapons', but there were puzzling lapses on the range.

It could not be said that over the same period ('59-'64) cricket afforded a welcome contrast, though, unlike Shooting, it enjoyed the opportunity of comparatively unlimited prac-

tice. Few juniors could claim to have had coaching at their preparatory schools - 'a sad outlook for Public School cricket', remarked the Magazine. The season of '60 (R.J. Sayer, 1956-61, Capt.), like the one before it, was not remarkable for statistical results.

The summer '63 Magazine provided exciting reminders: a photograph of the Centenary Hall actually under construction and the architect's drawing of the completed concept. An announcement all had hoped for set a seal on the whole project: H.R.H. Princess Alice had consented to attend the Centenary-day celebrations and open the new building. It was not yet known as the Athlone Hall. That title was adopted some little time later after the royal visit and following a letter, signed 'Albertian', to the Magazine editor suggesting that the use of the word 'Athlone' would be altogether fitting and would recall the visit of a very gracious lady.

Appropriate ways of marking the Centenary had been in the minds of Headmaster and Governors but the conception and execution of other projects demanded their attention, too. As early as '58 Stanley had suggested that the fields adjoining the Back should be levelled. The tremendous cost involved prohibited action, but when Robert Charsely gave up farming on Lords Meadow in '59 and the Meres were drained a year later the School's playing-field area was substantially increased. The establishment of Moreau House (September, '59) was not only a logical and necessary expansion: it was a bold move.

There was no special significance in the choice of Friday 26 June 1964 as the day to mark the hundredth year of the existence of the College, but a happier choice could hardly have been made. The complete success of the day's events did not depend on the absence of bad weather, but they certainly deserved the blessing of sunshine.

Princess Alice had been College Visitor for fourteen years and was no stranger, yet she brought with her the ambience of freshness and grace which had marked all her comings. Her Royal Highness, accompanied by Lord Stradbroke, Lord Lieutenant of the County and President of the Corporation, arrived at noon, the Front drive being lined by boys. Greeted by the Headmaster and conducted by Lieutenant-Colonel Podd, a Royal Marine band providing a fitting musical background, she inspected the Guard of Honour before introductions were made to the teaching and administrative staff.

The formal opening of the Centenary Hall was performed by H.R.H. at the invitation of Colonel Percy Clarke, Chairman of the Governors, and it was entirely fitting that he should undertake that pleasant duty: his father had been among the first pupils to enter the School; he himself, having joined in 1890, had watched and fostered the growth of the College for upwards of three-quarters of a century.

Princess Alice expressed the pleasure and sense of privilege that she, granddaughter of the remarkable man whose early death was commemorated by Suffolk men in the foundation of Framlingham College, felt at being invited to open the splendid new Assembly Hall in the Centenary Year.

Guest-speakers for Speech Days, all distinguished, brought news and observations of a wider scope. Dr. Lincoln Ralphs, Chief Education Officer of Norfolk, presented the prizes in '68, Lt. General Sir Dudley Ward in '70, Airey Neave, M.P., 'an amusing and interesting speaker', told of his escape from Colditz when he spoke at the '69 ceremony - a narrative which made all the more poignant the news of his cruel murder by the I.R.A., ten years after his visit. The guest-speaker in '71 was Lord Belstead, who spoke authoritatively on the educational achievements of the Government and warmly of the abundant contribution made to the College by

Stanley Porter in sixteen years of Headmastership up to his retirement.

The Centenary had been marked and celebrated to the deep satisfaction and gratification of every friend of the College: the Athlone Hall, the Science Block and Moreau House stood where grass once grew; sportsmen could enjoy a new cricket pavilion and squash courts; Lords Meadow had been added to the number of playing-fields; Sixth-formers felt that their stature had been truly recognised by the establishment of a Club. Brandeston Hall had grown as necessity and educational progress demanded. In the class-room the tendency had been to widen the understanding rather than to force specialisation. The field of opportunity for the appreciation and study of music had been considerably enlarged and Stanley had given a Prize for Reading.

Stanley retired to Southwold and Woodbridge. When Mrs. Porter died, he gave an Altar Frontal in her memory to the Chapel. Stanley reached his ninetieth birthday on 28 September 1999. Lord Belstead, the President of the Corporation, Mrs. Randall and a number of friends joined Mr. Porter for a surprise birthday tea and presented him with a Goldsmiths Medal in recognition of his distinguished service to the school. He was very delighted to receive this honour.

Many will remember Stanley Porter on a more personal level, for his contribution to Chapel services and particularly for the prayer which he unfailingly offered at the close of even-song and which closed his funeral service and the chapter on his Headmastership to the Second Sixty Years.

‘Oh, Lord, support us all the day long  
of this troublous life  
till the shadows lengthen and  
the evening comes, the busy  
world is hushed, the fever of  
life is over, and our work is done . . .’