



## **Chatham House Ramsgate**

1945 to 1952

A Personal View

M G Brown

## **My Background**

My parents moved from London to Westgate in 1938 (not the best of timing) when my father came to manage Margate Model Laundry. My brother and I went to Garlinge School where David (W D Brown) passed the 11+ for entry to Chatham House, but in 1940 most of the population of Thanet was evacuated, the schools to Staffordshire and parents to wherever they could find work. The junior schools went to Uttoxeter and Chatham House to Stafford, where they shared the premises of King Edward's Grammar School. My brother entered the School in September 1940.

I should have gone to Uttoxeter with my brother but I caught measles the day before the evacuation. By the time I was well enough to travel, the billeting officers in Staffordshire had all moved on so I was evacuated privately, to an aunt and uncle at Hunter's Quay in Argyll (I am probably the only person who has taken a Kent 11+ exam sitting in the headmaster's study of a school in Scotland) and entered the School in September 1945 just after the return from Stafford. My brother was then in the Upper Sixth, House Captain of Searles' and a School Prefect (he had been jumped a form during his second year, from Form 2 to Form 3). He was very active in the School, captained both 2<sup>nd</sup> XV Rugby and 2<sup>nd</sup> XI Hockey, and played the lead in the 1947 School play, "Goodbye Mr Chips".

My school path followed his in many ways – I was "jumped" at the start of the Spring term in 1947 from form 2a to form 3a, became house secretary of Searles' and a School Prefect, captained the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI cricket. The main differences were chess, where I was School Secretary, then Captain, dramatics where my contribution was backstage on the electrics rather than onstage, and study, where he was on the Arts side but I was a scientist.

After leaving, my brother went in to the Army (and trained as a radar instructor!) then to St Andrews University (including a year at the Sorbonne). He joined the Foreign and Colonial Office and was posted to Uganda, teaching at Nyakasura School in the foothills of the Ruwenzori, then set up Lango College in Lira before joining the Schools Inspectorate in Kampala. In 1967 he joined the British Council working in Tanzania, Nigeria, Tunisia and finally Kuwait, where he was the Resident. He was awarded an OBE which was gazetted on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1988.

I entered Brasenose College Oxford as a Hulme Open Exhibitioner in 1952, graduating in 1955 with a BA (2<sup>nd</sup> Class Honours) in Natural Sciences (Physics). While at college I organised the 1954 OR Oxford dinner with E R G Heath as guest of honour when there were 15 ORs in residence. After graduating I joined the aerospace industry with English Electric Aviation at Luton, staying with the Company through all its changes of name and location (BAC, BAe, British Aerospace Dynamics) before taking early retirement in 1992 when I was a Function Head responsible for some 700 staff in 5 departments on 3 sites. I was then a Governor, at North Hertfordshire College for the next 9 years, being Chairman of the Finance Committee for 7 of those years. I am a Chartered Engineer, Fellow of the British Computer Society and a member of the IET.

## Houses at Chatham House

At the Ramsgate County School for Boys, there were 4 original houses, named after the first House Captains:-

Coleman's

Simmon's

Searles' (named after G W Searles, the first House and School Captain)

Thornton's (later Air Vice Marshal H N Thornton, who presented the prizes at Speech Day in 1947)

After the First World War, and the County School 'morphing' into the vacant buildings of the defunct original Chatham House, 2 further Houses were added, Thomas's and Mann's, named after J W Mann, a ~~master~~<sup>an OR</sup> at the School and co-author of the School Song, ~~who was~~<sup>who were</sup> killed in the War.

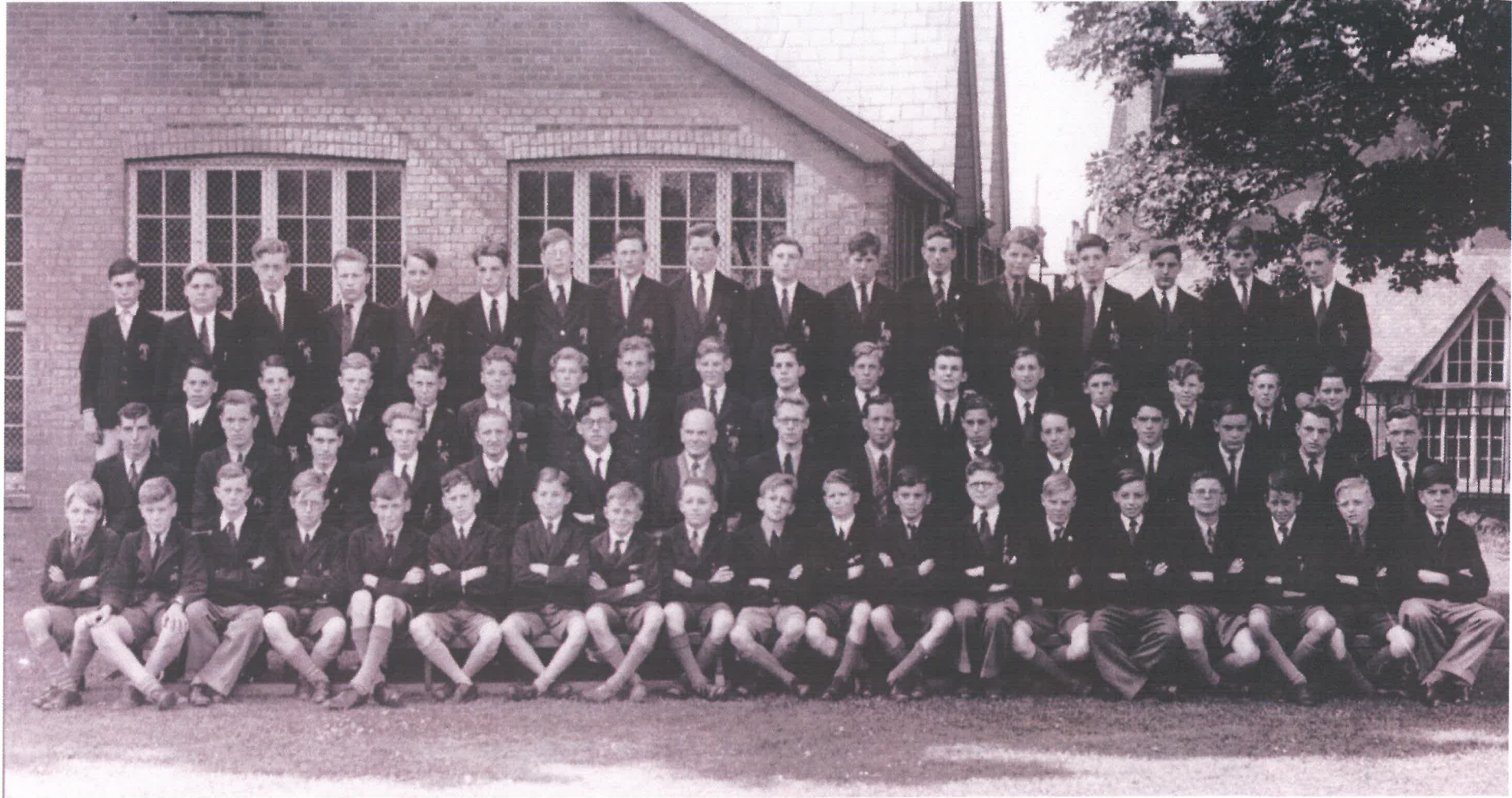
Later still circa 1930 another 2 houses were created, Norman's after the first Headmaster of the County School, and Larkin's, after the Chairman of Governors, making 8 in all.

In 1940 the School was evacuated to Stafford. After the Second War World and the return to Thanet, the first form boys were in a "Junior" House, and all others in the above 8 Houses. About 1950 there was a reorganisation and boys in forms 1 and 2 were allocated to 4 'Junior' Houses, Norman's, Larkin's ('demoted' from Senior Houses), Brackenbury's (after the Rev B V F Brackenbury, Headmaster from 1930 to 1946) and White's (after Alderman J J White, Chairman of Governors)

There was great competition to be "Cock House". In addition to the obvious sporting House competitions like rugby, hockey, cricket and athletics, there were cups for music, drama, chess etc – the "Cock House" competition was decided by a weighted sum of all these activities and, on occasion, positive marks for work and negative marks for detentions! When the competition was re-instated in 1946/47 the winners were Searles', who also won in 1951 and in 1952, the 17th time they had been "Cock House" in the 40 odd years of the School's existence (and the competition had been suspended for 7 years during and after the exile in Stafford).

\* and Arthur Lewis Thomas, one of the 5 original masters





### Searles' House, Summer 1947

Seated           ?           GD Hallams       DP Chapman       WD Brown       ?           ?           ?           ?  
           MP Sudbury       ?           Mr Fleming       Mr Goodram     Mr Malharry     ?           ?           ?           ?  
 MG Brown 4<sup>th</sup> from left in front row





Seated      ?      GC Sudbury      JC Meader      P Pidduck      JP Canniff      MG Brown      JS Moulton      AJ Sladden  
              ?                    ?                    HE Brockman      Mr Fleming      Mr Goodram      Mr Macmillan      L Nash                    ?

**Searles' House Summer 1951**

*No short trousers to be seen!*





## **The Senior Masters circa 1945**

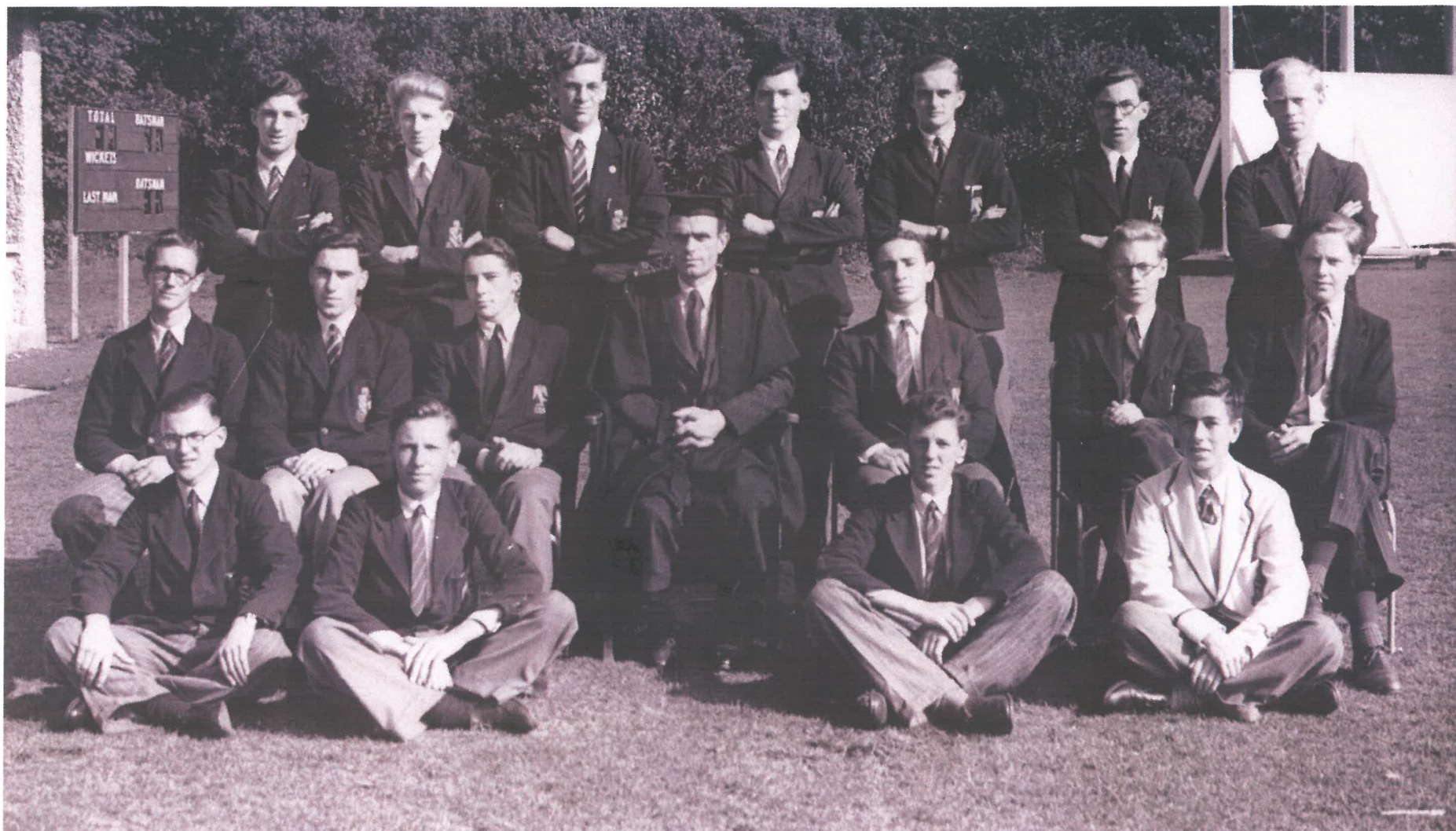
Headmaster	Rev B V F Brackenbury
Maths	Mr P ` Dicky' de Rome (second master and a dead shot with a board rubber)
English	Mr W V `Tufty' Goodram (house master Searles' and conductor of the School Choir)
French	Mr R Phillips (house master Coleman's)
Classics	Mr A H Nash-Williams (house master Larkin's)
History	Mr C T C Curzon (house master Thomas's)
Geography	Mr R V Wilsher (house master Thornton's)
Chemistry	Mr J A Leach (also producer of the School Plays)
Physics	Mr E P `Perce' Pester
Music	Mr L G Neville
Cricket	Mr C F J Jacobsen
Rugby	Mr E Lamb
Hockey	Mr W K Lewis

Rugby and Hockey were played in both the Autumn and Spring terms.

## **Senior prefects**

1945-46	J E Finch
1946-47	O P Chicherio
1947-48	SCE Whitehead
1948-49	E F Fowler
1949-50	B A Green
1950-51	J H Wilson ?
1951-52	J H Wilson
1952-53	J C Meader





GRE Stewart	G D Hallums	E J Hollands	P F Marlow?	R N Wheeley	D P Chapman	S G Smith
SCE Whitehead	D F Smith?	O P Chicherio	Mr W P Pearce	M Gradel	W D Brown	GRM Beadle
J E Ferry	D J Newton			R J Walters	R A Boxall	

**The Prefects, Summer Term 1947 - Mr Pearce's first term**

*Note that wartime shortages are still being felt - even the Senior Prefect does not have a prefect's badge*



## Location of Facilities

Clockwise round the playground:-

- Gymnasium, which doubled as Assembly Hall and theatre
- Art, woodwork and metalwork rooms
- Biology lab (in basement on other side of the lower entrance)

Ground floor facing out onto lower Sports Ground

- Maths (Mr De Rome)
- Headmaster's study, with the bay window – the secretary's office (Miss Gardner) was opposite
- English (Mr Goodram)
- Dining Hall

First floor

- Classrooms
- Prefects' room in centre looking over Chatham Street

Second floor

- Library
- Chemistry laboratory

### *Away from Main Building*

Townley House

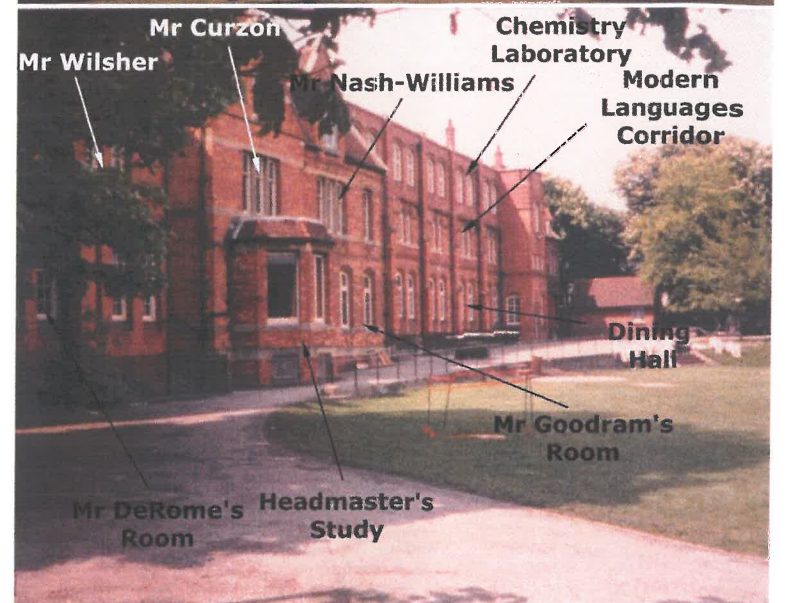
- Physics laboratory

Lower Sports ground

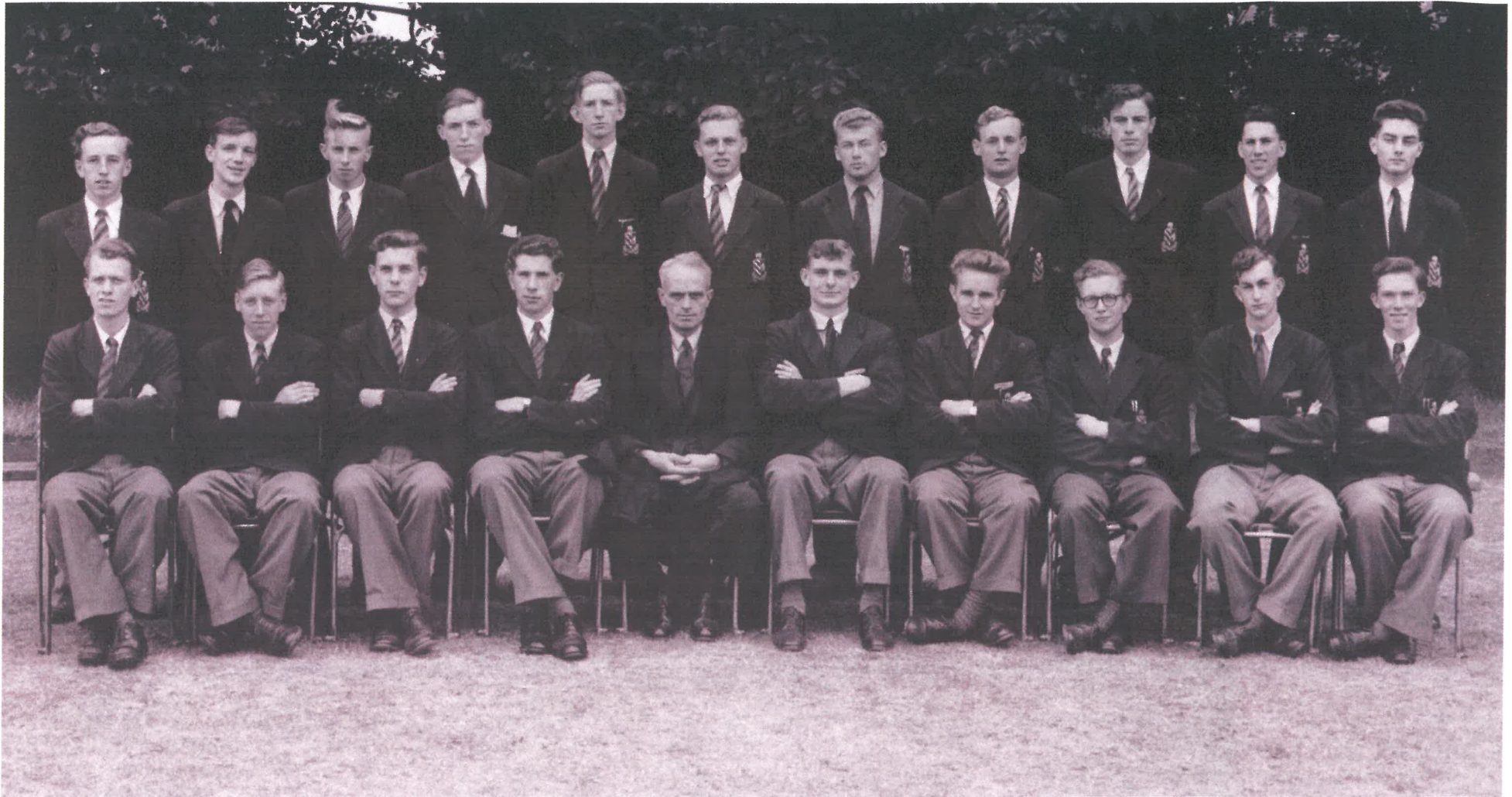
- Junior and house cricket

Upper Sports ground

- Rugby pitch
- Cricket square (*still in same place*)
- Hockey pitch



*The area behind the pavilion was all trees and shrubs, with a path near the perimeter which was part of the cross-country course*



B J Speller A D Main H E Brockman G C Sudbury ? A M Western N Wickland ? A G Fleming ? J E Hemmings  
P Jones AGR Butler G K Richards J C Meader Mr W K Pearce J H Wilson D D Porter M G Brown J S Moulton R Peacock

**The Prefects, Summer Term 1952**



## Memories 1945 - 52

The School rules for uniform as far as clothing coupons would allow - white shirt, grey trousers (short trousers for forms 1, 2 & 3), green blazer with School crest (a more ornate badge for perfects) - and the behaviour which was banned when wearing the uniform -  
no eating in the street, no shouting, fighting or in anyway making an exhibition of oneself  
no leaving School premises during the School day, including lunchtime, without special permission (the prefects patrolled the town to catch defaulters)

Being drawn against my brother in the chess competition in 1945 when I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> form and he was in the Upper VIth (I beat him);  
The first 3 months of 1947 when everywhere was frozen - there were hardly any School or House matches, except for Chess, that term;  
House rugby and hockey matches on Saturday mornings at Jackey Bakers' sports ground in the winter putting up with the biting east winds;

Swimming in the summer term at Ramsgate Marina at 9 am soon after the pool had been filled from the English Channel;

The letter from St Lawrence College which read something like "*now that the situation has returned to normal we propose to revert to the prewar practice and offer you one fixture per annum, to be played on our own ground*" – a letter received in the morning when the 1<sup>st</sup> XV were due to play St Lawrence on our ground. The School were turned out to watch and the score was something like 36 – 0, in the days when a try was 3 points;

The Staff v School cricket match when the School expected to win as usual, and were astonished when the Staff knocked up something like 150 for 3 wickets - no one told them that Mr Prescott, the new Chemistry master, had opened the innings for a club in the Lancashire League;

Another Staff v School match, hockey this time, when the new maths master Mr Gregg, who was a very good teacher if the class would let him, showed he could play, as might have been expected from a London University Purple.

One aspect of School life which would be very strange to today's pupils - there was next to no cooperation with Clarendon House. The only joint activity was the annual debate where both schools participated. Even in the School plays, where one might have expected that female roles would be undertaken by girls from Clarendon House, Mr Leach preferred to borrow his actresses from local drama groups.

### **Note on Mr W P Pearce**

During the War, when many of the younger members of staff had been serving in the Armed Forces, the prefects had taken on many of the duties that would normally be done by staff – the organising of sports and extra-curricular activities, maintenance of discipline – the prefects had exceptional responsibility and power, including the right to administer corporal punishment. The Rev Brackenbury thought this was very character-forming but when Mr Pearce became headmaster he did not approve and set out to weaken the power of the prefects by appointing a series of head prefects who were not the strongest candidates for the position. By 1951 he had succeeded in his aim.

In December 1951 8 boys from the Upper Sixth went to Cambridge to sit the Entrance Exam. At the headmaster's instigation Keith Wood and myself were entered for his old college, Emmanuel. About 10 days before we went to Cambridge, he told the pair of us we need not fear the entrance examinations - he had been to Emmanuel and arranged things so we were 'certainties' whatever happened in the exam. After the examinations 6 of the 8 entrants were offered places, Keith Wood and I were not. Three months later, both of us were awarded Exhibitions at Oxford, Keith at The Queens' and myself at BNC. This may be a little unfair - I know I did very badly in the Emmanuel entrance exam and well in that for BNC.

Incidentally, in 1947 my brother had passed his driving test and occasionally he and I would come to School in our father's car – Mr Pearce objected, Dad's car was a newer model than his or any other teacher's?