

"The Mclsaac Tapes"



Lex Devine, a radical, founded Clayesmore. Evelyn King, a pragmatist, combined it with Craighend from Scotland and established it at Iwerne. Roy Mclsaac transformed it into the financially viable school it is today.

Roy and Audrey Mclsaac have settled into their new home not far from the cathedral in Salisbury and one afternoon in July their peaceful retirement was interrupted when Robert Mash and Nick Zelle turned up, with tape recorder and microphone, for a wander down memory lane. Robert and I felt that as Roy had been in charge of Clayesmore at such an important time in its history - Co-education, and the linking of Senior and Prep schools on the Iwerne campus - OCs would be interested to read of some of the 'goings on' at this time when the sound foundations of the present Clayesmore were put in place.

Roy was, as ever, restrained and, unlike many, determined not to hurt anyone with his memories and comments. Here is a transcript of our conversation.

Roy Mclsaac. You ask me of some of my first impressions on arriving at Clayesmore. One of my first memories, do you remember Audrey, coming and looking at the gym with me? It was really awful - festooned with cobwebs. The Bursar, Seagrim, said "that's nothing to do with the staff - that's all part of the fagging system". By then, the PE master, Aldworth, had died so he could not be blamed.

Robert Mash. You can't do that now. Social Services stop almost all manuals and that sort of thing. When you have punishment manuals on Saturday, it's extremely difficult to know what to do. You can't let them go anywhere unsupervised. Litter is about all they can do - otherwise you are exploiting the young. Certainly in the eighties you would not have got away with anything that manuals did.

Roy. Another of my first memories as well as the dirt was of the damp because not only the bursar but the headmaster didn't put the heating on. There wasn't much central heating anyway was there ?

Nick Zelle. No. A whole day cutting logs.

Roy. And- everything was dirty because we had those awful coke stoves in the common rooms which did make things absolutely filthy and I think we were short of cash so it took some time before we could borrow some money to get a proper heating system installed and I remember at times that the walls were rather damp because there was no heating on. I was partly responsible, as Nick will remember, because I used to try to get to half-term in the autumn without heating. There was also the business of Roberts and another man spending a day cutting logs by the lake so that the senior common room should have a log fire and of course when I stopped that I was reminded how uncomfortable it was in the common room, which I fully accepted, as there was a little pot of anti-freeze put in the fire place and we all know who put that there (laughter). That is early memories and I do remember - I made rather a point for instance of not putting the fire on in my study very often and having housemasters' meetings and I remember Jim Tilden once going out and putting a coat on - it was all part of my feeling we had to economise and just to cap this particular aspect of the heating thing, Seagrim colluded with me on the whole of this. I will go on about the governors in a minute because they did not come to the school very often. I found them - although I got on well with the governors - really rather remote and I used to have to go to the House of Commons

interview room'J' for meetings and a lot of the government of the school was really conducted by Evelyn King coming in and talking to me and I gave him some gin and so on and he talked on and made decisions on that sort of basis. I had come from a school where I used to have the support of a small committee which met monthly and it was a finance committee so that I could bring my problems to them and they shared the responsibility with me. But in many ways it was quite pleasant to have ones own head really and not to be bothered by governors but there are things you do need support for - particularly when it comes to spending money. Well eventually I got a committee formed - a sort of executive committee, but as it consisted of Ramsden who lived in, I think, Manchester, a busy surgeon Tom Bradbeer who lived in Exeter and David Walser who was at Ely at the time, it wasn't easy to get them all together for meetings and that became part of the pattern of governing. But to go back and link it with the heating, Seagrim and I were determined to try and get some arrangements for the heating in the school, and also it links with this business about bringing the governors to the school. We got them to come and meet in the school and we said we would meet in the library which I don't think they ever had done before. So I said "Well you'd better get that fire going for them". He said " Oh no. No good giving them a fire when we want to make them realise how cold it is". So we sat in there in the cold while I brought up the item of central heating and of course that helped quite a bit to get the new system.

Robert. I did exactly the same when trying to get heating in the library when I was librarian. I had the meeting in the library on a cold day.

Roy. I remember my appointment - this is not really sour grapes though it may sound like it. It went quite well at the St Ermine's hotel and I remember - Mills, the farmer. He was a very nice man indeed. I liked him enormously. Well he ran us back after I had been appointed at St Ermine's. He said 'I'll run you to Waterloo 'and I think he'd asked us about the accommodation. We said, well yes it was a very nice new house and so on but of course we have got three children and I gather we are expected to entertain and if you tot up the rooms- there is one room above the kitchen and there are three others - our bedroom and two other very small single rooms. He said. 'That's all right we'll build you a room - an extension - over the garage. I distinctly remember him saying this in the taxi. Well we were there for thirteen years and it certainly was not built in our time but I gather it now has been. All good luck to those who have lived in and enjoyed it since, but it was a bit difficult at times and just a small anecdote that occurs to me about that room above the kitchen. As you remember, we used to have sixth form speakers and we nearly always entertained the guests for supper and gave them a bed for the night, and I won't mention the name, but he was - either a prep school headmaster or a retired prep school master. He was a fairly regular visitor. He had been a friend of Burke's, I think, and he was on the list and expected to come and anyway we had a talk from him and it was quite all right and we had got him back, and got him off to bed and I think I made some remark to Audrey when we were perhaps having a drink in the kitchen or just shutting up "Oh what a cracking bore that chap is." Sometime later, Anthony who, when he was down on vacation, always slept in that room said 'you realise you can hear every word you say" so we often wondered what sort of reaction that had. I don't know whether he did come after that. Anyway I am getting rather trivial so what else can I think of?

Robert. Wasn't he the chap that talked - an Irishman that gave a very rambling talk about something and didn't he want Guinness, or kept Guinness under his pillow.

Roy. Yes. I remember we had Enoch Powell and he got rather skittish when we took him upstairs. You probably remember Clare's dog Rex. We could not find Rex when he went up to bed - we thought he'd got under Enoch's bed and he got really rather childish "Come on - out you come", We found Rex asleep in his own bed downstairs! But we had some interesting people.

Nick. You had Lord Denning. Roy. Yes we had Lord Denning and I was really quite impressed when I took him early morning tea. His wife was in bed but he was fully dressed, and it was quite early I

think. He'd asked for tea and he was working on some legal papers in the window at whatever age he was then. He was a very pleasant guest. We had Heenan too, and his chaplain. Oh, and then there was the classic faux pas with C P Snow who was the first one, whom I fetched from Gillingham and brought him back and we gave him tea and he was our first one so we were probably a bit nervous about it all. I was quite genuinely an admirer of C P Snow. I had read all his 'Friends and Brothers' series and really thought them very good. Have you read them Bob?

Robert. Yes - not all of them.

Roy. I liked them and got really caught up with them very much but just at that time he'd written a book about the Moors murders - I can't now quite remember what it was called but that was very much in the public domain at the time and I said "I haven't read that. I have read all your other books and liked them very much and he said. "You should read it. It is rather good." Audrey said 'Oh yes. Perhaps we had better get it from the library'. Anyway we made up for that because for some reason, I don't know quite why, Audrey decided she'd give him some kidneys for breakfast and so we had a pleasant breakfast - we gave him bacon and kidneys and mushrooms and so on and he was delighted, he hadn't had kidneys for ages and ages. So I took him to Gillingham about 11.00 or something like that. He was going back to London. I said " would you like to be put in the restaurant?" (In those days there were restaurants on the train.) 'Restaurant! After your wife's breakfast.? Certainly not." We thought we'd made up for the book from the library. Do you want me to talk about shorts? You must have had strong views on shorts?

Nick. Yes do.

Roy. That was one I had to ponder about for a long time. I didn't come with any preconceived ideas but it became fairly clear to me that there was resistance by parents who were bringing their boys to look around the school with youngsters who'd already, perhaps in their prep schools even gone into long trousers. And I know we had endless debates about it and I knew that it was a great tradition. Did Bryanston still have them ?- I am not sure., they probably did.

Robert. Bryanston had them.

Roy. Still - a little longer

Robert. I'm not sure

Roy. I'm not sure now but anyway after, I think, we had discussed it with housemasters - I don't think I ever went to the OC association about it - I decided eventually that we would make the change but the option was given that anyone who wanted to, could continue to wear them, I think, at least in the summer term. But it was fairly noticeable that very few people did. I don't know if you felt there was strong reaction at the time. It was obviously a Clayesmore tradition and people like Appleby thought it was a shame but I felt it was necessary to move with the period.

Nick. I think at the time I probably felt strongly but I can't remember any strong feelings now.

Roy. I think there were feelings about - obviously inevitably some of the sixth formers felt quite strongly about it perhaps - I think they continued to - I can't think of any particular names but there were some. I have a feeling that there was a very unpleasant habit that one or two people had at the time. Those public notices that one used to put up on the board. You sometimes found that someone had made a smudge on your signature and so sometimes I had to take the thing down and write it out again. It was fairly clear that there was that element in the lower sixth who were perhaps resistant to me really having come in and making some changes.

Nick. I did not know that. I do remember that now - the signature thing on the board.

Roy. I don't know if I made a public issue of it. I think I thought probably it might be better to leave it but I do remember there was an undercurrent of dissent.

Nick. Before you came to Clayesmore what did you think were the tortes of the school? What attracted you?

Roy. Obviously the site I thought was absolutely marvelous. I only made one slightly sort of furtive visit really I came when I wondered whether to apply. I asked someone how to get to the school as I came down Iwerne hill and I think I discovered afterwards it was Seagrim's wife who told me where to go and we just drove around. I didn't say anything to my family who were with me at the time - we were probably coming back from holiday - I didn't tell them why I was doing it. I said there is this rather nice place round here and obviously the site was superb. I did not really know a lot about the school. I hadn't read Devine's book by then. I got hold of it later. I think the size of the school appealed to me. The school I had come from wasn't much different in size. I liked the idea of a boarding community very much. I think we both always enjoyed being in schools where one knows every one. I think that was very important to us really and I thought on arrival, and I still think it's true that it was a very happy place and the atmosphere was very good once one was there. It really was an enjoyable place to live and as Audrey would say, I think one knew everyone. She knew all the domestic staff well and used to go in to see them in their homes. People like Palethorpe when he was ill, and Nelly and John. She really felt she knew them well. So I think that was a strong attraction really. I would like to pay tribute to Robert Powell's role in the very difficult negotiations that took place when the Prep School arrived in 1973. They were greatly helped by his wisdom and experience. It was quite tricky: we had some difficult meetings but Bob Powell was extremely good and he did really mastermind the fusion of the two schools.

Nick. He had retired from Sherborne.

Roy. Yes he had: I met him just before he retired at an HMC meeting and I remember asking him at breakfast "If you are living in our part of the world - if I suggest to the Governors - would you come on ?. He said " Oh yes, I'll come and govern you. " and I think he was an excellent choice.

Nick. Didn't you get him to come and teach Greek ?

Roy. He taught Jonathan Wetton and helped him get a scholarship to Oxford. He came in sometimes and Jon used to bicycle over to him. He thought he was pretty bright. I have lost touch with Jon.

Robert. We saw a photograph of him a couple of days ago.

Roy. Did you?

Robert. When we went back with Ruth Dear after Mrs T's funeral. She had a whole lot of old photos and there was Jonathan in a play, wasn't it?

Nick. And in Figaro.

Robert. And in Figaro - yes. Those were the days!

Roy. Oh yes. Rachel turned up in Salisbury for many years. I used to find her in the arts centre.

Nick. Rachel Wetton?

Roy. Yes - She was at Clayesmore.

Nick. I think she was one of the first boarding girls. Didn't she come up from the prep?

Roy. I think she did. I am sure she did. Yes

Nick. Now talking about that - I can't remember what order things happened but we went co-ed more or less at the same time as the prep were coming up.

Roy. Well yes - I suppose the first business of any approach to co-ed was when we took in the Croft House girls into the sixth form, of which of course Jane Salkeld was one of the members - amazing the way she has gone on - the position she has got in the Society and we had no more than, I think, about half a dozen from Croft House then.

Nick. You taught Jane.

Robert. Yes I taught Jane..... and one other from there - the name temporarily escapes me

Roy. A red haired girl

Robert. Yes - Ruth - was she called Ruth?

Roy. Yes

Robert. I remember Brian Wright took a lovely photograph of her on the mounting block and suggested it should be the front of the school magazine but you vetoed it.

Roy. Oh did I? I can't think why.

Robert. Very long legs and short skirt. Yes her father was a general I think in Shroton.

Roy. I think you're right. Yes - yes. I suppose that was the first, then am I right in thinking that we then admitted girls to the sixth form? I am afraid I haven't got any dates about me now. Quite separately once the Croft House thing - you see once - that was in .- oh whose time was that - I have forgotten the, woman's name. When Barbara Warley came she was more anxious to keep up her own show

Nick. I remember the lady.

Robert. Trumpington?

Nick. No - after her

Roy. No it was after Caesar Torkington

Nick. It was a Mrs Harper or Hammond

Roy. I am afraid I have lost the name now. I think it was Palmer - found it - she was so weakly staffed at that level that it was fairly easy for us to say well we'll take your historians, we'll take your biologists, and Appleby had some for English I think but then Barbara wanted to try and build it up

and it eased off a bit then, I think we then went the dates I have lost now - direct entry to the sixth form - the dates can be discovered somewhere. Is that right Robert?

Robert. I can't remember that. I remember that they started trickling in from the prep school - Jane Davis was one of them.

Roy. There were five girls, none of whom I think survived to the sixth did they? There were five - you are quite right - Jane Davies was one - the doctors' daughter.

Nick. I thought you took the decision that we should not go for the sixth form entry but that we should go after the girls from Croft House experiment.

Roy. Maybe we had them at both ends but we certainly had girls in the sixth form.

Robert. Because there were so few at the bottom.

Nick. But I felt we were one of the first schools that would take girls right from the beginning - right through and not just the sixth form because everybody else seemed to be thinking about girls at the sixth form level.

Roy. You are quite right. We said we would go right through.

Nick. And of course it was before the prep school move because when the prep school building was built, that was when the first girls' house was built too. We already had them somewhere. Where were they? Because do you remember that the end of the prep school....

Roy. That became the girls' house.

Nick. But I think we had.

Roy. Were they all day girls to start with?

Nick. Maybe they were.

Robert. Jane was. Was Susan Kerr one?

Roy. Oh yes - she must have been a boarder because we had the boys. Jane was very bright - yes - that's right.

Nick. And then the prep school building went up with our end to it for the girls.

Roy. Miss Pitcher was the first Housemistress.

Nick. Was she the first?

Roy. Yes - she was the first housemistress. Vendela (Elverson) came later.

Robert. Vendela then took over the same building.

Nick. Right.

Roy. Yes - and then we moved the girls down to the vicarage.

Nick. That's right but I think at one time, if I remember rightly, Gay Arden became the assistant housemistress but resident in the girls' wing and Vendela went back to living in Sutton Waldron - and then you bought the vicarage

Roy. I think that was a good buy.

Nick. Oh excellent.

Roy. A very pleasant house to have really as a boarding house

Nick. Were there any tricky negotiations to have over that ?

Roy. No, I don't think there were. I think it was fairly straight forward. I am very pleased we got that. I liked the place very much. I think it lends itself very well to a civilised boarding house.

Nick. And of course Robert is still in touch with the Wells

Roy. Are you?

Robert. Canon Wells' son Christopher, lives in Paris and he has a little house in Hilton. He always comes over with his wife when ever he can, and Penny, of course.

Roy. Penny Marsh. Is Mrs Wells still alive?

Robert. Yes, she is.

Roy. I did see her at someone's funeral service

Robert. She lives in a home outside Queens Avenue

Roy. I remember recognising her and we talked to her at one of those memorial services - there have been so many recently

Robert. Well of course she said while she was there she certainly wouldn't allow central heating in the vicarage.

Roy. Oh did she?

Nick. Another character of those days whom I remember you being very fond of was - Do you remember Mrs Hayter?

Roy. Yes indeed I do

Nick. Who got the Royal Maundy money

Roy. Yes I remember the Royal Maundy. I was horrified the other day, incidentally, to hear that people were flogging their Royal Maundy as they came out of Gloucester Cathedral. There were all sorts of spivs round who go and say 'You know it's really worth more than ... It's only worth eighty pence to you - or sixty but I will give you so and so. Yes I do remember - she was marvellous - she always used to bring me coffee all through the vac and through the term time - a lovely woman, she was and I was very, very fond of Mrs Hayter and I do remember that - didn't we ask her to show it to the school at lunch one day?

Nick. Yes

Roy. - she lived up at Ashmore - that place where the ducks are and the pond. There were some great characters weren't there - old Palethorpe - I must be careful what I say about Palethorpe. One of the things I think I did as it were to help modernise the school a bit - Do you remember the exchange just inside the door? Because Palethorpe's main job was to be the telephone operator and he would not only listen in to everything but all the calls - there was a little booth wasn't there?

Nick. With a handle

Roy. Yes - he would ring through and I think I said - - we can't go on with this. It's ridiculous really having to spend this time - so I got this business of direct dialing.

Nick. I remember a story concerning you. You asked me to come into your study one break because you said you thought that some rather unusual characters seemed to be making a habit of going into chapel during break and they always seemed to be going in at the organ end. You asked me if I knew what was going on. I said 'No I didn't'

Roy. I have forgotten this one

Nick. Anyway you got me there. You came and said come over - and sure enough all these people - about eight or nine people. It is to do with Palethorpe because we saw them going in and I raced across the grass

Roy. I've forgotten this one.

Nick. And went into chapel and they were absolutely nowhere to be seen. I came back to you and said 'They are not there. They must have gone out of the Chaplain's vestry - we could not see that from your study and we thought that's what was happening. About a week later you came to the Common Room again and said 'Come over again. They are there.' And again I went and could find absolutely nothing and I think it was about a day later, poor old Palethorpe nearly had a heart attack because he had his little broom cupboard at the end of the chapel and he opened the broom cupboard door and there dangling from the roof - the trap door - were a pair of legs.

Roy. Good Lord

Nick. And what they were doing was getting into that tiny little space over the entrance porch which had a height of about three feet - and there was a bowl of 'dog ends' and that was what they were doing - they were getting up into that little chapel roof through Palethorpe's little thing.

Roy. We might have had the fire earlier than we did!

Nick. And Ian Crabbe was one of those.

Roy. I had forgotten that

Nick. You thought it was very odd - these people going into the chapel in break.

Robert. What we haven't got on the tape is your initial recollection about turning up and finding there were twenty fewer than you were expecting.

Roy. It depressed me enormously because as you know the whole financial state of the school depends on its numbers. And to make up that number wasn't easy as you know - it really was quite a long haul before we even got somewhere near a break-even point so that's when we were so desperately short of cash to buy anything or do anything. I can't really remember now without looking up things - I used to keep records obviously. The other thing I always kept in my pocket - I did it for my previous school - I always had a little thing in my diary or somewhere - was the live births each year - you know there are so many - the census people - they always produce that there are 500,000 a year or some years it drops and of course all these sort of bulge figures - one just waited till you got to 700,000 instead of being 450,000. I used to keep that nearly all through my headmastership career to see when the next hope might come. I can't remember - I don't know when it happened - I don't know how long without looking but I used to keep a graph showing - we might have dropped a little bit to start with but I think we gradually pulled up - and then it was possible to buy the odd thing but I had been used to this at my previous school - I had the same sort of problems there. I remember not even having enough money to seed a newly cleared patch with grass seed at one time. Now it seems so much - the money that seems to be available to spend - I mean it seems to be so much more than it used to be and I think salaries are relatively higher too.

Nick. I remember at one time when numbers were not good at Clayesmore when Bill Duncan died that you acted as bursar as well as headmaster - and all you had was Marjorie Teasdale.

Roy. She was marvellous as we said last week at her funeral- she really was, but it was a strain - that time - to do both jobs - and I suppose it did result in the problems I had - I was rather over-worked then - but she was absolutely first class. It was not only Bill's death - he was ill for a long time - there was the knowledge that he was mortally ill but you can not dispense with someone in that situation - I had the same situation with Humphrey Moore who I knew would never come back - you can have temporary replacements but you can not make a decision on a man's future while he is languishing in a Southampton hospital.

Nick. That was fairly early on in your career.

Roy. Fairly - of course I was greeted - my first thing was Aldworth's death in the Squash court with Mike Henbest. That I was told before I had even officially taken up as I did not take up my post until September and he died in August, so the first thing I had to do was to find a new man. I don't know if you remember but I got a rather nice man - a retired Colonel - do you remember? An elderly man - I have forgotten his name - he put himself up at a hotel in Fontmell Magna and used to come in - he saved the day for us - he might not have been ideal but he did a good job temporarily until I appointed Mike Foot.

Nick. I remember before you appointed Robert you had somebody called Regnart

Roy. Yes

Robert. Dr Regnart. Didn't he drop off during a staff meeting.?

Roy. I think he did. And then of course one of the unfortunate consequences - it worried me a lot about this drop in numbers - I did get really worried - Audrey will tell you that I sometimes couldn't sleep - meant that I had to get rid of a member of staff and as you know, I had to get rid of Dan and not only that - I got rid of two didn't I. I had to get rid of Drinkall as well. You see what I did was to get rid of Drinkall and Dan and appoint Malcolm Sowdon who was both a scientist and a parson - it was not a pleasant thing to do, and as we know, not an ideal arrangement then or later with Pritchard. That was my solution to a problem that I had to save that amount on salaries as I just could not pay the staff as a whole with the money we had. So the inevitable thing is that you do have these cuts as I suppose you have had, Bob- since.

Nick. Now on to something a little more cheerful. When you got to Clayesmore - admittedly they were getting to the end of their time - but there were three or four amazingly strong characters.

Roy. There were.

Nick. Spinney, Appleby, Humphrey Moore, Verrinder.

Roy. There were. I was very privileged to have them.

Nick. How did you find it to work with them? Were they difficult?

Roy. Not as such - obviously they might well have been - I was aware they might have been critical of me. I admired Carl's breadth of vision - a sort of Leonardo - the plays - the climbing - a marvellous man.

Nick. You say that you thought they must have been critical of you. I don't recall that at all. I felt they thought you were such a breath of fresh air after Bunter. I don't remember them being. I am not saying they weren't.....

Roy. Well Spinney was very good to me really and Appleby was delightful and easy. I do remember after the first housemasters' meeting them saying 'Thank God we have had some decisions today'. I felt I got on well with them and of course Apples was very easy - I remember the poor old chap sitting in that room which had not been decorated ever.

Nick. Since Edward the Seventh –

Roy. The bath –

Robert. That wonderful bath.

Roy. Talking of the room - the study - of course - my predecessors had both been very heavy smokers - Bunter and also Evelyn King - I don't know if you ever looked at the colour of the ceiling in those days - it was really absolutely nicotine stained and I think Dobie possibly got at it before I left, but it really was a most extraordinary chocolate coloured. I think Evelyn King mentioned what a wonderful room that was to sit in - but it also had its disadvantages as he felt it was such a lovely room it was difficult to get anything done in it. It was a very splendid room. I remember that first meeting - I don't know if you remember it - you would have been there Nick - in that study when I was produced - we had a drinks party. I remember being slightly lobbied at that early stage about what did I feel about the house system? Whether I was going to change it - Of course obviously I was going to live with it to start with - but it was being poured into my ear that wouldn't it be a good thing to go for the traditional house system instead of the juniors Middles and Seniors. And of course we stuck with it for quite a long time. Is it still ?- No we have changed now.

Robert. That's right - it changed with Hawkins.

Nick. I went through it and I always thought that that was by far the best system.

Roy. It seemed to suit the Clayesmore set up.

Nick. You all went up together.

Roy. I think there were difficulties about that for a headmaster in so much as you found that Mac treated the boys differently from Skinner and you had tensions between some people who felt that if they had been in another house they wouldn't have been treated in the same way.

Nick. When you first took over there was only Humphrey - there was only one Middles house - there was a Juniors, Middles, and Seniors

Roy. The Manor was built before I came.

Robert. After I left and before I returned.

Roy. I came and Mac was already a housemaster in the Manor and I think they were all rather feeling their new role as housemasters. Humphrey was there. Do you remember the clock tower? I remember having some difficulties with Humphrey because - was there a boy called Reynolds?

Nick. There was - Mark Reynolds - ginger hair.

Roy. Because he repaired the clock as part of his service - Humphrey was furious because it went down through his room, Humphrey was a very interesting man, wasn't he. He was not easy I suppose but I found him very loyal. You were asking earlier about my arrival at Clayesmore. We were greeted by Seagrim who was very good to us indeed and he decided to get all the ground staff out on parade as we arrived with a Pickfords van and as you probably know, the removal people like to take all the things out and put them in the places, but he had got all his staff out including Jennings, Scammel, Dobie and maybe someone else and they were all on the lawn in front of the house - it was a fairly dry day I think - we turned up and they all helped carry things in. I think probably not to the great approval of the professionals. I don't know if you remember I had quite a lot of trouble with my back - I had had it out quite a bit before, when I was at Ryde and it was in my habit to sleep on a table-tennis table, under the mattress - recommended by an orthopedic surgeon. This came out of the van and was due for the bedroom. I remember Jennings to this moment saying 'Games room?'

Roy. What about the Headmaster's wife's views.

Audrey. Best forgotten - Susie Wong!

Roy. Oh yes. Do you remember Susie Wong ?

Robert. It's ringing a bell.

Audrey. My long black skirt with a slit up the side.

Robert. Those were the days.

Nick. While talking of clothes. Do you remember the first Ball we had when various people helped and they made a big effort. Then on the day afterwards - your back was obviously in good shape then - nobody could believe that you had put on a pair of pink jeans - salmon pink jeans - and were heaving chairs and tables. Everyone was saying "Have you seen him?- have you seen him?- pink jeans!".

Roy. I do remember.

Audrey. Do they still have dances - Balls ?

Robert. They do but what has happened is that they are at places elsewhere - like the Crown in Blandford so it's not quite so evocative of the place - your last day - if you go trundling off to a hotel.

Roy. Those wonderful dances of Spinney's - The dashing white sergeant - Cranborne Chase girls were very blasé about them - they danced in bare feet - they thought they were very odd. They hadn't danced anything like that before. They were good fun.

Nick. What about the Chapel fire ?

Roy. That was very dramatic wasn't it. I can't remember who it was now who came and shouted up to our window. Someone came over and called up

Audrey 'Headmaster. "We are very sorry to wake you up sir, but the chapel is on fire".

Nick. It wasn't David Mann was it?

Roy. It might have been - I just can't remember. I think I have written about it somewhere.

Audrey. Who was the Chaplain

Nick. I think it was Malcolm Sowdon. I remember Robert was the master in charge of fire.

Roy. Oh yes.

Robert. It must have been Sowdon because I was living in - the second year I was there - I was living in Shroton

Roy. And then we had the Clayesmore lecture the next night.

Nick. I had been to my sister's for dinner, near Shepton Mallet and had come back quite late and had just got to bed and gone off to sleep when there was this knock on the door.

Roy. And you were told.

Nick. It was David Mann and I thought it was some joke so I said 'Oh go away - go away. 'He said "It's important Sir." -, "Go away". "But sir, it's the chapel on fire." Then when he said it is the organ end, I jumped out of bed.

Roy. I remember you coming over. I remember you there. I don't like the roof now. Do you? I am sorry they didn't restore the old design.

Robert. No - its like being in a big blancmange isn't it ?

Roy. Yes, that's right.

Nick. You are talking about inside.

Roy. They should have restored it.

Nick. Well they did - they have since repainted it.

Roy. Oh it's since? Oh yes of course they did. They did it in my time.

Nick. George Dobie did it.

Roy. That's right. Of course they did. It wasn't the result of the fire. No it was done in my time and then when I went back once I was horrified to see it so bland.

Robert. Well it's sort of yellowy.

Nick. We had a word with the new headmaster before coming over - just checking that everything was still in order for September 16th. And he said you won't be surprised to hear that we are planning an appeal quite soon. So I said "What are you appealing for?" He said there is so much to do. He said all the right things to start with - the organ needs work on it - the chapel is in a mess - the chemistry lab –

Robert. Gate house - all that thing - the science needs to be shifted out and then the whole thing redone.

Nick. I think it was you I remember being put very firmly in your place by Seagrim once.

Roy. On what was that

Nick. It was probably even your first term when we had been getting at you a bit about the lack of heat and I remember you mentioning it to Seagrim in front of a few people in the staff common room that it would be nice to have the fire. I remember him saying to you "Its all very well headmaster. Put an advertisement in the paper for a headmaster and the GPO has to put on extra post vans to deliver all the mail. But put in an advertisement for a stoker. Nothing!

Roy. Very good. One of the results of getting that heating going and abandoning those awful coke stoves - they made such a dirty mess - was that there was no manual - one of the main objects of the manual.

Nick. Shovelling coke outside the library.

Roy. Beating - I stopped that. Do you remember? Well some of it - not all of it.

Robert. Funnily enough - talking about beating - when I went through the biology lab when I arrived, I found a little catalogue for punishment canes - I found it a couple of days ago - the traditional - whips - and all that sort of thing.

Roy. No. I think what I stopped - I used it once or twice - but I did not enjoy it very much as it always gave me tennis elbow.! What I did stop was boys beating boys. Spinney let the Senior house do that and I was not very happy about that. I think I stopped that fairly quickly.

Roy. Do you remember - very early days - of course smoking was a problem - I don't think we had drugs in those early days - we had a bit later but smoking always was a problem - it seemed to be pretty bad at Clayesmore and I found Gregory had smoked on the train going up to London with junior boys, so I pulled him down from prefect -I stopped him being a prefect - and everyone was amazed that I did that.

Audrey. Horrified!

Nick. Mike Gregory. He was a prefect with Wallrock wasn't he?

Roy. Yes that's right and that caused a lot of difficulty with the senior house and with Watto because I think Gregory said well if he was not going to be a prefect - his father said I think I'll take him away and of course he was a very good fast or spin bowler. I was very unpopular.

Audrey. Did he take him away?

Roy. I am not so sure that he might not have left.

Nick. I don't think he left.

Roy. Probably not . It was just suspension. It caused a bit of an uproar, I remember **Audrey.** We used to pass a couple, We had no idea whom they were. We were in the car going towards Shaftesbury and you'd say 'Oh dear, there go two of my smokers - I think the exercise does more good than the cigarette does harm.'

Nick. Smoking was a big problem.

Roy. It was really. And of course Mike Foot was the great man - the policeman.

Robert. Well I think he probably encouraged it in so far as it used to be a little sport -lure him on with little lights and he would come along with his torch.

Roy. You know the story of Colquhoun, don't you and the car? You've heard that one. You know that Colquhoun kept a car. I tell you how we discovered it. I mean I did not know at all but I think we mentioned Clare before and she had a dog - Rex. One day Rex was barking furiously seeing a boy walk across the foot path to Shillingston Lodge and I thought oh there is Colquhoun smoking or something but something made me a little more suspicious so I wandered up there and found he'd got a car parked there in the lodge drive.

Robert. Now of course they may have cars and there's a list that goes up in the common room - who has a car and who's allowed to drive.

Roy. Does it work all right?

Robert. It seems to.

Audrey. Where do they keep them?

Robert. They keep them in the car park next to the sports hall and they drive home. These are day pupils or weekend boarders. It seems to be alright - nothing funny has happened.

Roy. The problem is if they give lifts to others, isn't it

Robert. So they are not allowed to give lifts except to specified people.

Roy. Didn't we collect some drunks on the way back from somewhere one day - coming back from Shroton. And then someone had discovered that shepherd's hut on Hod hill belonging to Campbell - no, what's the man's name, I can't quite remember. There was a land owner.

Robert. Well Campbell owned Preston Hill - the local one as his daughter was at the prep.

Roy. There was someone - one of the land owners - who had no time for Clayesmore boys. Anyway I think some boys were smoking and he rang me up once and said “they have far too much free time - there was never as much free time when I was at Eton” or something like that. I think it is time I put the kettle on !