

Trinity musings from Keverne Weston - August 2020:

I'm sure that there will be many memories - most of them negative - about Dalrymple; he certainly was a beast. I've sent stuff about him before but, thinking about my experience at Trinity in the light of what goes on in schools today, I have come to realise a few things:

DISCIPLINE: Having taught in two very different types of school, I can now look at the way Trinity's staff approached matters of discipline. Mr. Eustace was calm, donnish and slightly quaint in an 'absent-minded professor' kind of way and we respected him. I found Mr. Howson's accent so difficult to grasp and actually wrote 'par' because that is what I thought he'd said when in fact the word was 'power'. Restless in Physics, I was often called out but that was reasonable as I was badly behaved through boredom. Mr. Bartlett was quiet and kind. Mr. Wintle was irascible and threw board rubbers. Mr. Mackie shouted, blustered and slipped (I once got three). Miss Parsons had a stately and commanding presence; Miss Jobson was timid and easily teased. Mr. McDonald was so involved when he was at the piano that he didn't notice the mayhem that was going on behind him. The determination that any music mentioned was entirely of his own choosing, totally ignored that this was the beginning of Rock 'n' Roll. 'Early One Morning' and 'Non Nobis Domine' have their place but he wasted opportunities to connect with us. It was in the third year that polar opposite approaches to discipline could be observed. Our form master was Mr. Kurt and he was autocratic and quite nasty. We may have been frightened of him but our reaction was to become the worst-behaved class in the school – or so we were told. Thinking back, I can't remember the circumstances that led to me throwing a chair across the room, but I did. There may have been a degree of prejudice on our part as it was only ten years after the war and Kurt was a German. We had a new, young English teacher, Mrs. Hase, and we made her life hell, driving her from the classroom in tears more than once. One day, Mrs. Naish, a senior Maths teacher, who always wore very pretty dresses, came into 3C and talked quietly and reasonably to us about our treatment of Mrs. Hase; I think we may have been in tears. I remember this so well because Janet Hase became a very supportive friend to me and didn't have any trouble from 3C again.

FLEXIBILITY: There was a lack of flexibility in the way the classes were organised, although I believe we were told that 'late-developers', or those who were failing, could be moved to another class. After the first year, classes were divided into A – Sciences; B – Arts; C – 'Don't knows' and D – 'Not doing so well'. Invariably, senior teachers and Heads of Department taught the Arts and Science classes, while we lesser mortals had the younger, less-experienced teachers. I was a don't know and, although I did well in all the Arts subjects, there was never any question of me being moved, maybe because of my tolerated absences from other lessons. At the end of the fifth year, preparing to leave to do God knows what, Mr. Johnson, the English teacher, persuaded me to stay on and go into VI Arts; some pastoral care at last. In retrospect I can see that to bring about change in the school's rigid organisation, you had to make a lot of noise. A boy in the year below me protested at having to do Woodwork when he wanted to do Home Economics because he hoped to be a chef; he got his way and I wish I had known about it at the time as I would have done the same. In the Lower Sixth, we started off doing four A Levels, but then Dalrymple decreed that we

could only do three. Most of us accepted, but one person with a very loud voice, got her own way and continued to do four. It pays to speak up and that's what I tend to do now.

RACISM: I remember that, between 1954-1961 there were 5 non-Caucasian pupils. The Ghafur brothers were very popular; Leila Javeri was quiet and I thought she looked rather neglected in her uniform. When she came to the Christmas party, she wore a sari, her hair was out of plaits and she looked stunning. At a reunion a few years ago, I reminded her of how she appeared at the party and how beautiful she looked; she denied she was there. Maybe I should not have commented on her appearance (#MeToo etc.) Elaine Hutchinson / Delmar was quite rightly celebrated and sometimes played the piano in assembly. A West Indian boy called Wentworth Bethune joined the school, in the year below me and was an instant sensation; he was good-looking, sporty and everyone wanted to be his friend. As far as I could see, there was no racism but, maybe being fascinated with something that is 'other' is another form of it. Maybe the Ghafurs would see things differently.

NEGLECT: I feel I was neglected. My mother was never telephoned or sent for to talk about my behaviour. From the third year I used to absent myself from the lessons in which I had no interest. Therefore, Physics, Chemistry and Woodwork saw very little of me. Instead of going to those lessons, I would go and sit on the stairs with a book; if I heard someone coming, I got up and looked as though I was on an errand. Did you know you could get from Trinity to the top of Alexandra Palace and back in 40 minutes - the length of a period? After the second year, I didn't do Games or P.E. I broke my wrist practising for the long jump so was unable to do games or P.E. for weeks. After that I decided I didn't want to do them again so wrote a letter 'from my mother' saying that, at four years old, I had had rheumatic fever, that I had a weak heart and could no longer participate in vigorous exercise. I had had rheumatic fever but my heart was fine. I played a different kind of game while left to my own devices in the pavilion. The letter's veracity went unchecked and so did I. I still remember the exact wording of what was on my leaving report: 'Keverne has been highly selective throughout his time here; perhaps too much so.' So, why did they let me get away with it?

HEALTH AND SAFETY: We crossed a main road on our own in order to get to White Hart Lane. Mackie had 4 classes of boys for football so the rest of us - those not doing it - were left unsupervised. Similarly, the Games mistress would have 4 classes of girls. For a teacher to have to look after 60 pupils alone seems unbelievable today. One task for skivers was to tidy the football shirts. Nobody had their own football kit so the shirts were worn several times a week and, as far as I know, never washed.

PASTORAL CARE: I don't think there was any; certainly, there was very little reference to Katrina Mansell's murder after the initial announcement the following day. When I mentioned that my parents were getting a divorce, in an essay we had to write for Mr. Bartlett, entitled 'Me', he did say that if ever I had any problems, I should come to him. That was it. Was there a careers adviser? If so, they missed me and I left Trinity without having any idea what I would do. When I was 17, I ran away from home during half term, was away for 5 days, then back at school after the holiday. There was no liaison between my mother and the school so they didn't know, nor did they know about the suicide attempt a few months later. I was obviously a very troubled teenager but the teachers were oblivious.

BULLYING: When I watch films or TV programmes that include scenes set in school it is inevitable that there will be scenes of bullying. Of course, social media is a contributory factor but actual physical bullying seems pretty widespread. At Trinity, if there was any bullying, I never saw it. Going to my grand-parents' for lunch meant that I spent less time in the playground but I never saw boys fighting. However, there was one girl, who used to be a friend of mine, that bullied other girls; I can remember two specific examples. Similarly, when I was teaching, I don't remember having to deal with many incidents of bullying. Occasionally boys would fight but it was soon resolved and there was no ongoing situation. It was slightly different with girls as their intense friendships could be subject to tears and 'you're not my friend any more' declarations. I would be interested to know from other old scholars whether they thought there was much bullying.

I expect that, apart from various Dalrymple horror stories, most people's reminiscences will be suffused with a roseate glow; mine are not. I have to thank one person from Trinity for directing me to the straight and narrow. After leaving, I kept in touch with a few friends, including Mildred Stroud. She was at Teacher Training College and told me that she thought I would love it and that I'd be good at it. I believed her and started applying. At Trent Park, I was dismayed to find that my interviewer was Dalrymple and he obviously remembered me. When I did get in to another college, remembering what a dreadful pupil I had been, I vowed that I would be the opposite now I'd been given this chance. I never missed a lecture, seminar, or tutorial and I did all the work and got it in in time. I even kidnapped a friend who was in danger of failing and locked her in, telling her she wouldn't come out until she had finished her Pinter thesis. She did it and 50+ years later we're still friends. Mildred doesn't want any part of Trinity which is a pity as I'd like to thank her.

So, there's some, maybe slightly different, Trinity musings.

Keverne Weston - August 2020